

AN  
EXPOSITION

ON THE  
Old and New Testament,

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IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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VOL. II.

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CONTAINING,

I CHRONICLES.

II CHRONICLES.

EZRA.

NEHEMIAH.

ESTHER.

JOB.

PSALMS.

PROVERBS.

ECCLESIASTES.

The Song of SOLOMON.

WHEREIN

Each CHAPTER is summed up in its CONTENTS; the sacred Text inserted at large in distinct paragraphs; each paragraph reduced to its proper Heads; the sense given, and largely illustrated:

WITH

Practical Remarks and Observations.

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By MATTHEW HENRY,  
late Minister of the Gospel.

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The Fourth Edition.

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# A N E X P O S I T I O N Of the First BOOK of C H R O N I C L E S. W I T H P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

*In common things repetition is thought needless and nauseous; but in sacred things precept must be upon precept, and line upon line; To me, saith the apostle, to write the same things is not grievous, but for you it is safe, Phil. iii. 1. These books of Chronicles are much of them repetition; so are much of the second and third of the four Evangelists; and yet no tautologies either here or there, no vain repetitions. We may be ready to think, of all the books of holy scripture we could best spare these two books of Chronicles; perhaps we might, and yet we could very ill spare them, for there are many most excellent useful things in them, which we find not elsewhere: And for what we find here which we have already met with, (1.) It might be of great use to those who lived when these books were first published, before the canon of the Old Testament was compleated, and the particles of it put together, for it would mind them of what was more fully related in the other books. Abstracts, abridgments, and references, are of use in divinity as well as law. That, perhaps, may not be said in vain, which yet has been said before. (2.) It is still of use, that out of the mouth of two witnesses every word may be established, and being inculcated may be remembered. The penman of these books is supposed to be Ezra, that ready scribe in the law of the LORD, Ezra vii. 6. It is a groundless story of that apocryphal writer, 2 Esdr. xiv. 21, &c. that all the law being burnt, Ezra was divinely inspired to write it all over again; which yet might take rise from the books of Chronicles, where we find, though not all the same story repeated, yet the names of all those who were the subjects of that story. These books are called in the Hebrew Words of days; journals, or annals, because by divine direction collected out of some publick, and authentick records. The collection was made after the captivity, and yet the language of the originals written before is sometimes retained; as 2 Chron. v. 9. There it is unto this day, which must have been written before the destruction of the temple. The Septuagint calls it a book Παράλειπον of things left, or overlooked by the preceding historians, and several such things there are in it. It is the rereward, the gathering host of this sacred camp, which gathers up what remained, that nothing might be lost. In this first book we have, (1.) A collection of sacred genealogies, from Adam to David; and they are none of those whom the apostle calls endless genealogies, but have their use and end in Christ, chap. i—ix. Divers little passages of history are here inserted, which we had not before. (2.) A repetition of the history of the translation of the kingdom from Saul to David, and of the triumph of David's reign, with large additions, chap. x—xxi. (3.) An original account of the settlement David made of the ecclesiastical affairs, and the preparation he made for the building of the temple, chap. xxii—xxix. These are words of days, of the oldest days, of the best days of the Old Testament church. The reigns of kings and dates of kingdoms, as well as the lives of common persons, are reckoned by days; for a little time oft gives a great turn, and yet all time is nothing to eternity.*

## C H A P. I.

*This chapter, and many that follow it, repeat the genealogies we have hitherto met with in the sacred history, and put them all together with considerable additions. We may be tempted, it may be, to think it had been well if they had not been writ, because when they come to be compared with other parallel places, there are differences found which we can scarce accommodate to our satisfaction; yet we must not therefore stumble at the word, but bless God that the things necessary to salvation are plain enough. And since the wise God has thought fit to write these things to us, we should not pass them over unread. All scripture is profitable, though not all alike profitable; and we may take occasion for good thoughts and meditations even from those parts*  
N<sup>o</sup>. XXIX.

*of scripture that do not offer us any plenty of observations. These genealogies (1.) Were then of great use, when they were here preserved, and put into the Jews hands after their return from Babylon; for the captivity, like the deluge, had put all into confusion, and they in that dispersion and despair, would be in danger of losing the distinctions of their tribes and families: this therefore revives the ancient land-marks; even of some of the tribes that were carried captive into Assyria. Perhaps it might invite the Jews to study the sacred writings which had been neglected, to find the names of their ancestors, and the rise of their families in them. (2.) They are still of some use for the illustrating of the scripture story, and especially for the clearing of the pedigrees of the Messiah; that it might appear that our blessed Saviour was, according to the prophecies that went before*



before of him, the son of David, the son of Judah, the son of Abraham, and the son of Adam: And now he is come for whose sake these registers were preserved; the Jews since have so lost all their genealogies, that even that of the priests, the most sacred of all, is forgotten, and they know not of any one man in the world that can prove himself of the house of Aaron. When the building is reared, the scaffolds are removed; when the promised seed is come, the line that was to lead to him is broken off. In this chapter we have an abstract of all the genealogies in the book of Genesis till we come to Jacob. (1.) The descents from Adam to Noah and his sons, out of Gen. v. ver. 1—4. (2.) The posterity of Noah's sons, by which the earth was re-peopled, out of Gen. x. ver. 5—23. (3.) The descents from Shem to Abraham, out of Gen. xi. ver. 24—28. (4.) The posterity of Ishmael, and of Abraham's sons by Keturah, out of Gen. xxv. ver. 29—33. (5.) The posterity of Esau, out of Gen. xxxvi. ver. 35—54. These, it is likely, were passed over lightly in Genesis, and therefore, according to the law of the school, we are made to go over our lesson again which we did not learn well.

1. **A**DAM, Sheth, Enoch, 2. Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered, 3. Henoch, Methushelah, Lamech, 4. Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 5. ¶ The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. 6. And the sons of Gomer; Ashchenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. 7. And the sons of Javan; Elifha, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. 8. ¶ The sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. 9. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabta, and Raama, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. 10. And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth. 11. And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphthum, 12. And Pathrusim, and Casluhim (of whom came the Philistines) and Caphtorim. 13. And Canaan begat Zidon his first-born, and Heth, 14. The Jebusite also, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite, 15. And the Hivite, and the Archite, and the Sinite, 16. And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. 17. ¶ The sons of Shem; Elam, and Ashur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Meshech. 18. And Arphaxad begat Shelah, and Shelah begat Eber. 19. And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg (because in his days the earth was divided) and his brothers name was Joktan. 20. And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah, 21. Hadoram also, and Uzal, and Diklah, 22. And Ebal, and Abimael, and Sheba, 23. And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. 24. ¶ Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, 25. Eber, Peleg, Reu, 26. Serug, Nahor, Terah, 27. Abram, the same is Abraham.

This paragraph has Adam for its first word, and Abraham for its last. Between the creation of the former, and the birth of the latter, was about two thousand years; almost the one half of which time Adam himself lived. Adam, the common father of our flesh, Abraham, the common father of the faithful. By the breach which the former made of the covenant of innocency we were all made miserable: by the covenant of grace made with the latter, we all are, or may be made happy. We all are by nature the seed of Adam, branches of that wild olive. Let us see to it, that by faith we become the seed of Abraham, Rom. iv. 11, 12. that we be planted into the good olive; and partake of its root and fatness.

(1.) The four first verses of this paragraph, and the four last, which are linked together by Shem, ver. 4—24. contain therein the sacred line of Christ from Adam to Abraham, and are inserted in his pedigree; the order ascending as here descending, Luke iii. 34—38. that their reproach may appear malicious, who said of him, *As for this man, we know not whence he is.* Bishop Patrick well observes here, that a genealogy being to be drawn of the families of the Jews, this appears as the peculiar glory of the Jewish nation, that they alone were able to derive their pedigree from the first man that God created, which no other nation pretended to; but abused themselves and their posterity with fabulous accounts of their originals. The Arcadians fancying that they were before the moon; the people of Thessaly that they sprung from stones; the Athenians that they grew out of the earth: much like the vain imaginations which some of the philosophers had of the origin of the universe: The account which the holy scripture gives both of the creation of the world, and of the rise of nations, carries with it as clear evidences of its own

truth, as those idle traditions do of their own vanity and falsehood.

(2.) All the verses between repeat the account of the replenishing of the earth by the sons of Noah after the flood. 1. He begins with those that were strangers to the church, the sons of Japheth, who were planted in the isles of the Gentiles, those western parts of the world, the countries of Europe; of these he gives a short account, ver. 5—7. because with these the Jews had hitherto had little or no dealings. 2. He proceeds to those that had been many of them enemies to the church, the sons of Ham, who moved southward towards Africa, and those parts of Asia which lay that way. Nimrod of Cush began to be an oppressor, probably, to the people of God in his time; but Mizraim, from whom came the Egyptians, and Canaan, from whom came the Canaanites, are both of them names of great note in the Jewish story; for with their descendants the Israel of God had mighty struggles, to get out of the land of Egypt, and into the land of Canaan; and therefore the branches of Mizraim are particularly recorded, ver. 11, 12. and of Canaan, ver. 13—16. See at what rate God valued Israel, when he gave *Egypt for their ransom*, Isa. xliii. 3. and cast out all these nations before them, Psal. lxxx. 8. 3. He then gives an account of those that were the ancestors and allies of the church, the posterity of Shem, ver. 17—23. these peopled Asia, and spread themselves eastward; the Assyrians, Syrians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Arabians descended from these. At first the originals of the respective nations were known; but at this day we have reason to think the nations are all so mingled with one another, by the enlargement of commerce and dominion, the transplanting of colonies, the carrying away of captives, and many such occasions, that no one nation, no nor the greatest part of any, is descended entire from any one of these fountains. Only this we are sure of, that God has *created of one blood all nations of men*, they are all descended from one Adam, one Noah. Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Mal. ii. 10. Our register hastens to the line of Abraham, breaking off abruptly from all the other families of the sons of Noah, but that of Arphaxad, from whom Christ was to come: The great promise of the Messiah (saith bishop Patrick) was translated from Adam to Seth, from him to Shem, from him to Eber, and so to the Hebrew nation, who were intrusted above all nations with that sacred treasure, till the promise was performed, and the Messiah was come, and then that nation was made not a people.

28. The sons of Abraham; Isaac, and Ishmael. 29. ¶ These are their generations: The first-born of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, 30. Mishma, and Dumah, Massa, Hadad, and Tema, 31. Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael. 32. ¶ Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: the bare Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan. 33. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Ephraim, and Henoah, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these are the sons of Keturah. 34. And Abraham begat Isaac. The sons of Isaac; Esau and Israel. 35. ¶ The sons of Esau; Eliphaz, Reuel, and Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah. 36. The sons of Eliphaz; Teman, and Omar, Zephi, and Gatam, Kenaz, and Timna, and Amalek, 37. The sons of Reuel; Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. 38. And the sons of Seir; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, and Dishon, and Ezar, and Dishan. 39. And the sons of Lotan; Hori, and Homam: and Timna was Lotan's sister. 40. The sons Shobal; Alian, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. And the sons of Zibeon; Aiah, and Anah. 41. The sons of Anah; Dishon. And the sons of Dishon; Amran, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran. 42. The sons of Ezer; Bilhan, and Zavan, and Jakan. The sons of Dishan; Uz, and Aran. 43. ¶ Now these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the children of Israel; Bela the son of Beor: and the name of his city was Dinhabah. 44. And when Bela was dead, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah, reigned in his stead. 45. And when Jobab was dead, Husham of the land of the Temanites, reigned in his stead. 46. And when Husham was dead, Hadad the son of Bedad (which smote Midian in the field of Moab) reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith. 47. And when Hadad was dead, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. 48. And when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth by the river, reigned in his stead. 49. And when Shaul was dead, Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. 50. And when Baal-hanan was



was dead, Hadad reigned in his stead : and the name of his city was Pai ; and his wives name was Mehetabel the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. 51. ¶ Hadad died also. And the dukes of Edom were ; duke Timna, duke Aliah, duke Jetheth, 52. Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon, 53. Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar, 54. Duke Magdiel, duke Iram. These are the dukes of Edom.

All nations but the seed of Abraham are already shaken off from this genealogy, they have no more part or lot in this matter ; the Lord's portion is his people, them he keeps account of, and knows by name, but those who are strangers to him he beholds afar off. Not that we are to conclude, that therefore no particular persons of any other nation but the seed of Abraham found favour with God ; it was a truth before Peter perceived it, *that in every nation he that feared God and wrought righteousness was accepted of him.* Multitudes will be brought to heaven out of every nation, Rev. vii. 10. and we are willing to hope there were many, very many good people in the world that lay out of the pale of God's covenant of peculiarity with Abraham, whose names were in the book of life, though not descended from any of the following families written in this book. *The Lord knows them that are his.* But Israel was a chosen nation, elect in type, and no other nation, in its national capacity, was so dignified and privileged as the Jewish nation was. That is the holy nation, which is the subject of the sacred story, and therefore we are next to shake off as decently as we can all the seed of Abraham, but the posterity of Jacob only, which were all incorporated into one nation, and joined to the Lord, while the other descendants from Abraham, for ought appears, were estranged both from God and from one another.

1. We shall have little to say to the Ishmaelites, they were the sons of the bond-woman, that were to be cast out, and not to be heirs with the child of promise, and their case was to represent that of the unbelieving Jews, who were rejected, Gal. iv. 22, &c. and therefore there is little notice taken of that nation ; only Ishmael's twelve sons are named here, ver. 29, 30, 31. to shew the performance of the promise God made to Abraham in answer to his prayer for him, that for Abraham's sake he should become a great nation, and that particularly he should beget twelve princes, Gen. xvii. 20.

2. We shall have little to say to the Midianites, who descended from Abraham's children by Keturah, they were children of the east, probably Job was one of them, and were dismissed from Isaac, the heir of the promise, Gen. xxv. 6. and therefore they are only named here, ver. 32. and of Midian (who became most eminent, and perhaps gave denomination to all these families, as Judah to the Jews) one generation more, ver. 33.

3. We shall not have much to say to the Edomites, they had an inveterate enmity to God's Israel, yet because they descended from Esau the son of Isaac, we have here an account of their families, and the names of some of their famous men, ver. 35, to the end ; some inconsiderable differences there are between some of the names here, and as we had them, Gen. xxxvi. whence this whole account is taken. Three or four names that were written with a vau there, are written with a jod here : probably, the pronunciation being altered, as is usual in other languages. We now write many words very differently from what they were written but two hundred years ago.

Let us take occasion from the reading of these genealogies to think, (1.) Of the multitudes that have gone through this world, have acted their part in it, and then quitted it. Job, even in his early day, saw not only every man drawing after him, but innumerable before him, Job xxi. 33. All these, and all theirs had their day, many of them made a mighty noise and figure in the world, but their day came to fall, and their place knew them no more. The paths of death are trodden paths, and *vestigia nulla retrorsum.* (2.) Of the providence of God which keeps up the generations of men, and so preserves that degenerate race, though guilty and obnoxious, in being upon earth. How easily could he cut it off without either a deluge or a conflagration ? Write but all the children of men childless, as some are, and in a few years the earth will be eased of its burthen, under which it groans ; but the divine patience not only lets the trees grow that cumber the ground, but lets them propagate. As one generation, even of sinful men, passeth away, another comes, (Eccl. i. 4. Numb. xxxii. 14.) and will do so while the earth remains. *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.*

## CHAP. II.

We are now come to what was principally intended, the register of the children of Israel, that distinguished people, that were to dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations. Here is,

1. The names of the twelve sons of Israel, ver. 1, 2. And then, 2. An account of the tribe of Judah, which has the precedence not so much for the sake of David, as for the sake of the son of

No. 29.

David, our Lord, who sprang out of Judah, Heb. vii. 14. (1.) The first descendants from Judah, down to Jesse, ver. 3—12. (2.) The children of Jesse, ver. 13—17. (3.) The posterity of Hezron, not only through Ram, from whom David came, but Caleb, ver. 18—20. Segub, ver. 21—24. Jerahmeel, ver. 25—33. and so to ver. 41. and more by Caleb, ver. 42—49. with the family of Caleb the son of Hur, ver. 50—55. The best exposition we can have of this and the following chapters, and which will give the clearest view of them, is those genealogical tables which were published with some of the first impressions of the last English bible about a hundred years ago, and continued for some time ; and it is pity but they were revived in some of our latter editions ; for they are of great use to those who diligently search the scriptures. They are said to be drawn up by that great master in scripture-learning Mr. Hugh Broughton. We meet with them sometimes in old bibles.

1. THESE are the sons of Israel ; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, 2. Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. 3. ¶ The sons of Judah ; Er, and Onan, and Shelah : which three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua the Canaanite. And Er the first-born of Judah, was evil in the sight of the LORD, and he slew him. 4. And Tamar his daughter in law, bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah were five. 5. The sons of Pharez ; Hezron, and Hamul. 6. And the sons of Zerah ; Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara : five of them in all. 7. And the sons of Carmi ; Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed. 8. And the son of Ethan ; Azariah. 9. The sons of Hezron, that were born unto him ; Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai. 10. And Ram begat Amminadab ; and Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah ; 11. And Nahshon begat Salma, and Salma begat Boaz, 12. And Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, 13. ¶ And Jesse begat his first-born Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimna the third, 14. Nethaneel the fourth, Radai the fifth, 15. Ozen the sixth, David the seventh : 16. Whose sisters were Zeruiah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah ; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three. 17. And Abigail bare Amasa : and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmeelite.

Here is, 1. The family of Jacob ; his twelve sons are here named, that illustrious number so oft celebrated almost throughout the whole bible, from the first to the last book of it : at every turn we meet with the twelve tribes that descended from these twelve patriarchs : the personal character of several of them was none of the best ; the four first was much blemished, and yet the covenant was entailed on their seed ; for it was of grace, free grace, that it was said, *Jacob have I loved ; not of works, lest any man should boast.*

2. The family of Judah. That tribe was most praised, most increased, and most dignified of any of the tribes, and therefore the genealogy of it is the first and largest of them all. In the account here given of the first branches of that illustrious tree, which Christ was to be the top branch of, we meet, first, with some that were very bad. Here is Er, Judah's eldest son, that was evil in the sight of the Lord, and was cut off in the beginning of his days by a stroke of divine vengeance, the Lord slew him, ver. 3. His next brother Onan was no better, (and fared no better.) Here is Tamar, with whom Judah her father-in-law committed incest, ver. 4. And here is Achan, also called Achar, a troubler, that troubled Israel by taking of the accursed thing, ver. 7. Note, The best and most honourable families may have those belong to them that are their blemishes. 2. With some that were very wise and good, as Heman and Ethan, Calcol and Darda, who were not, perhaps, the immediate sons of Zerah, but descendants from him, and are named because they were the glory of their fathers house ; for when the holy Ghost would magnify the wisdom of Solomon, he saith, he was wiser than those four men, who, though the sons of Mahol, are called Ezrahites, from Zerah, 1 Kings iv. 31. That four brothers should be eminent for wisdom and grace, was a rare thing. (3.) With some that were very great, as Nahshon, who was prince of the tribe of Judah, when the camp of Israel was formed in the wilderness, and so led the van in that glorious march ; and Salman or Salmon, who was in that post of honour when they entered Canaan, ver. 10, 11.

3. The family of Jesse, of which a particular account is kept for the sake of David, and the son of David, who is a red cut of the stem of Jesse, Isa. xi. 1. Hence it appears that David was a seventh son, that his three great commanders, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, were the sons of one of his sisters, and Amasa of another. Three of the four went down slain to the pit, though they were the terror of the mighty.

10 T

18. ¶



18. ¶ And Caleb the son of Hezron begat children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth: her sons are these; Jether, and Shobab, and Ardon. 19. And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, which bare him Hur. 20. And Hur begat Uri, and Uri begat Bezaleel. 21. ¶ And afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir, the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was threescore years old, and she bare him Segub. 22. And Segub begat Jair, who had three and twenty cities in the land of Gilead. 23. And he took Geshur, and Aram, with the towns of Jair, from them, with Kenath and the towns thereof, *even* threescore cities: all these *belonged to* the sons of Machir, the father of Gilead. 24. And after that Hezron was dead in Caleb-ephrah, then Abiah, Hezron's wife, bare him Asher the father of Tekoa. 25. ¶ And the sons of Jerahmeel the first-born of Hezron were, Ram the first-born, and Bunah, and Oren, and Ozem, and Ahijah. 26. Jerahmeel had also another wife, whose name was Atarah, she was the mother of Onam. 27. And the sons of Ram the first-born of Jerahmeel were Maaz, and Jamin, and Eker. 28. And the sons of Onam, were Shammai and Jada. And the sons of Shammai; Nadab, and Abishur. 29. And the name of the wife of Abishur was Abihail, and she bare him Ahban, and Molid. 30. And the sons of Nadab; Seled, and Appaim: but Seled died without children. 31. And the sons of Appaim; Ishi. And the sons of Ishi; Shephan. And the children of Shephan; Ahlai. 32. And the sons of Jada the brother of Shammai; Jether, and Jonathan: and Jether died without children. 33. And the sons of Jonathan; Peleth, and Zaza. These were the sons of Jerahmeel. 34. ¶ Now Shephan had no sons, but daughters: and Shephan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha. 35. And Shephan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife, and she bare him Attai. 36. And Attai begat Nathan, and Nathan begat Zabad. 37. And Zabad begat Ephlal, and Ephlal begat Obed. 38. And Obed begat Jehu, and Jehu begat Azariah. 39. And Azariah begat Helez, and Helez begat Eleasah. 40. And Eleasah begat Sifamai, and Sifamai begat Shallum. 41. And Shallum begat Jekamiah, and Jekamiah begat Elishama. 42. ¶ Now the sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel, were Mesha his first-born, which was the father of Ziph: and the sons of Marefhah the father of Hebron. 43. And the sons of Hebron; Korah, and Tappuah, and Rekem, and Shema. 44. And Shema begat Raham, the father of Jorkoam: and Rekem begat Shammai. 45. And the son of Shammai was Maon: and Maon was the father of Beth-zur. 46. And Ephah Calebs concubine bare Haran, and Moza, and Gazez: and Haran begat Gazez. 47. And the sons of Jahdai; Regem, and Jotham, and Geshan, and Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph. 48. Maachah Calebs concubine bare Shebet, and Tirhanah. 49. She bare also Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of Machbenah, and the father of Gibeaz: and the daughter of Caleb was Achsa. 50. ¶ These were the sons of Caleb the son of Hur, the first-born of Ephrath; Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim, 51. Salma the father of Beth-lehem, Hareph the father of Beth-gader. 52. And Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim, had sons; Haroeh, and half of the Manahethites. 53. And the families of Kirjath-jearim; the Ithrites, and the Puhites, and the Shumathites, and the Mishraites: of them came the Zareathites, and the Eshtaulites. 54. The sons of Salma; Beth-lehem, and the Netophathites, Ataroth, the house of Joab, and half of the Manahethites, the Zorites. 55. And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of He-math, the father of the house of Rechab.

The persons mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, are most of them such as we read of, and most of them such as we read much of in other scriptures. But there are very few of these here, that are ever mentioned any where else. It should seem, the tribe of Judah were more full and exact in their genealogies than any other of the tribes, in which we must acknowledge a special providence for the clearing of the genealogy of Christ.

1. Here we find Bezaleel, who was head-workman in building the tabernacle, *Exod.* xxxi. 2.

2. Hezron who was the son of Pharez, *ver.* 5. is the father of all his progeny. His sons, Caleb and Jerahmeel, being very fruitful, and he himself likewise, even in his old age; for he left his wife with child when he died, *ver.* 24. This Hezron was one of the seventy that went down with Jacob into Egypt, *Gen.* xvi. 12. there his family thus encreased, as other of the oppressed families there did; we cannot but suppose he died during the Israelites bondage in Egypt, and yet it is here said he died in Caleb-ephrah, *i. e.* Bethlehem, in the land of Canaan, *ver.* 24. Perhaps, though the body of the people continued in Egypt, yet some that were more active than the rest, at least before their bondage came to be extreme, visited Canaan sometimes, and got footing there, though afterwards they lost it. The achievements of Jair, here mentioned, *ver.* 22, 23. we had an account of *Numb.* xxxii. 41. and, it is supposed, were long after the conquest of Canaan. The Jews say, Hezron married his third wife when he was sixty years old, *ver.* 21. and another after, *ver.* 24. because he had a great desire of posterity in the family of Pharez, from whom the Messiah was to descend. Here is mention of one that *died without children*, *ver.* 30. and another, *ver.* 32. and of one that *had no sons, but daughters*, *ver.* 34. Let those that are either of these ways afflicted, not think their case new or singular. Providence orders these affairs of families by an uncontrollable sovereignty, as pleaseth him, giving children, or withholding them, or giving all of one sex. He is not bound to please us, but we are bound to acquiesce in his good pleasure: To those that love him, he will himself be better than ten sons; and give them in his house a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters. Let not them therefore that are written childless, envy the families that are built up, and replenished. Shall our eye be evil because God's is good? Here is mention of one who had an only daughter, and married her to his servant an Egyptian, *ver.* 34, 35. If it be mentioned to his praise, we must suppose, that this Egyptian was profelyted to the Jewish religion, and that he was very eminent for wisdom and virtue, else it had not become a true-born Israelite to match a daughter to him, especially an only daughter. If Egyptians become converts, and servants do worthily, neither their parentage nor their servitude should be a bar to their preferment. Such an one this Egyptian servant might be, that she who married him might live as happily with him, as if she had married one of the rulers of her tribe. The pedigree of several of these terminate not in a person, but in a place or country, as one is said to be the father of Kirjath-jearim, *ver.* 50. another of Bethlehem, *ver.* 51. which was afterwards David's city, because these places fell to their lot in the division of the land. Lastly, Here are some that are said to be *families of scribes*, *ver.* 55. such as kept up learning in their family, especially scripture learning, and taught the people the good knowledge of God. Among all these great families, we are glad to find some that were *families of scribes: Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!* all the families of Israel families of scribes, well-instructed to the kingdom of heaven, and able to bring out of their treasury things new and old!

### C H A P. III.

Of all the families of Israel, none so illustrious as the family of David. That is the family which was mentioned in the chapter before, *ver.* 15. Here we have a full account of it. (1.) David's sons, *ver.* 1—9. (2.) His successors in the throne as long as the kingdom continued, *ver.* 10—16. (3.) The remains of his family in, and after the captivity, *ver.* 17—24. From this family, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

1. **N**OW these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the first-born Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess: the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess: 2. The third, Absalom the son of Maachah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur: the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith: 3. The fifth, Shephatiah of Abital: the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife. 4. These six were born unto him in Hebron, and there he reigned seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. 5. And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel: 6. Ithar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet, 7. And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 8. And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. 9. These were all the sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister.

We had an account of David's sons, 2 *Sam.* iii. 2, &c. and chap. v. 14, &c. 1. He had many sons, and, no doubt, wrote as he thought, *Psal.* cxxvii. 5. *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of these arrows.* 2. Some of them were a grief to him, as Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah. And we do not read of any of them that imitated his piety and devotion, except Solomon,



mon, and he came far short of it. 3. One of them which Bathsheba bare to him, he called Nathan, probably in honour of Nathan the prophet, who reproved him for his sin in that matter, and was instrumental to bring him to repentance. It seems he loved him the better for it as long as he lived. It is wisdom to esteem those our best friends that deal faithfully with us. From this son of David our Lord Jesus descended, as appears, *Luke iii. 31.* 4. Here are two Eliphaz's, and two Eliphelets, *ver. 6.* and *ver. 8.* probably, the two former were dead, and therefore David called two more by their names; which he would not have done if there had been any ill omen in it, as some fancy. 5. David had many concubines, but their children are not named, as not worthy of the honour, *ver. 9.* the rather, because the concubines had dealt treacherously with David in the affair of Abalom. 6. Of all David's sons, Solomon was chosen to succeed him, perhaps not for any personal merits, his wisdom was God's gift; but so, *Father, because it seemed good unto thee.*

10. ¶ And Solomons sons was Rehoboam, Abia his son, Afa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, 11. Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, 12. Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, 13. Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, 14. Amon his son, Josiah his son. 15. And the sons of Josiah were, the firstborn Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. 16. And the sons of Jehoiakim; Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son. 17. ¶ And the sons of Jeconiah; Assir, Salathiel his son, 18. Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. 19. And the sons of Pedaiah were, Zerubbabel, and Shimei: and the sons of Zerubbabel; Meshullam, and Hananiah, Shelomith their sister: 20. And Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, and Hafadiah, and Jushab-besed, five. 21. And the sons of Hananiah; Pelatiah, and Jedaiah: the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shecaniah. 22. And the sons of Shecaniah; Shemaiah: and the sons of Shemaiah; Hattush, and Igeal, and Bariah, and Neariah, and Shaphat, six. 23. And the sons of Neariah; Elioenai, and Hezekiah, and Azrikam, three. 24. And the sons of Elioenai were, Hodaiah, and Eliashib, and Pelaiah, and Akkub, and Johanan, and Dalaiah, and Anani, seven.

David having nineteen sons, we may suppose them to have raised many noble families in Israel, whom we never hear of in the history. But the scripture gives us an account only of the descendants of Solomon here, and of Nathan, *Luke iii.* The rest had the honour to be the sons of David, but these only had the honour to be related to the Messiah. The sons of Nathan were his father's, as man; the sons of Solomon his predecessors, as king. We have here,

(1.) The great and celebrated names by which the line of David is drawn down to the captivity; the kings of Judah in a lineal succession; the history of whom we have had at large in the two books of Kings, and shall meet with again in the second book of Chronicles. Seldom has a crown gone in a direct line from father to son for seventeen descents together, as here. This was the recompence of David's piety. About the captivity the lineal descent was interrupted, and the crown went from one brother to another, and from a nephew to an uncle; which was a preface of the eclipsing of the glory of that house.

(2.) The less famous, and most of them very obscure names in which the house of David subsisted after the captivity. The only famous man of that house that we meet with at their return from captivity, was Zerubbabel, elsewhere called the son of Salathiel, but appearing here to be his grandson, *ver. 17, 18, 19.* which is usual in scripture. Belshazzar is called Nebuchadnezzar's son, but was his grandson. Salathiel is said to be the son of Jeconiah, because adopted by him, and some think succeeding him in the dignity to which he was restored by Evilmerodach; otherwise Jeconiah was written childless: he was the *signet God plucked from his right hand*, *Jer. xxii. 24.* and in his room Zerubbabel was placed; and therefore God saith to him, *Hag. i. 23. I will make thee as a signet.* The posterity of Zerubbabel here, bear not the same names that they do in the genealogies, *Matt. i.* or *Luke iii.* but those, no doubt, were taken from the then heralds office; the public registers which the priests kept of all the families of Judah, especially that of David.

The last person named in this chapter is Anani; of whom bishop Patrick saith the Targum adds these words, *He is the king Messiah, who is to be revealed*; and some of the Jewish writers give this reason, because it is said, *Dan. vii. 13.* the son of man came *in, Anani (with the clouds of heaven.)* The reason indeed is very foreign and far-fetched, but that learned man thinks it may be made use of as an evidence that their minds were always full of the thoughts of the Messiah, and that they expected

it would not be very long after the days of Zerubbabel before the set-time of his approach would come.

## C H A P. IV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A further account of the genealogies of the tribe of Judah, the most numerous and most famous of all the tribes. The posterity of Shobal the son of Hur, *ver. 1—4.* Of Ashur the posthumous son of Hezron, who was mentioned, chap. ii. 24. with something particular concerning Jabez, *ver. 5—10.* Of Chelub, and others, *ver. 11—20.* Of Shobal, *ver. 21—23.* (2.) An account of the posterity and cities of Simeon, their conquest of Gedor, and of the Amalekites in mount Seir, *ver. 24—43.*

1. **T**HE sons of Judah; Pharez, Hezron, and Carmi, and Hur, and Shobal. 2. And Reaiah the son of Shobal begat Jahath, and Jahath begat Ahumai, and Ladad. These are the families of the Zorathites. 3. And these were of the father of Etam; Jezreel, and Ishma, and Idbash: and the name of their sister was Hazelponi. 4. And Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These are the sons of Hur, the first-born of Ephratah, the father of Beth-lehem. 5. ¶ And Ashur the father of Tekoa, had two wives, Helah and Naarah. 6. And Naarah bare him Ahuzam, and Hopher, and Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. 7. And the sons of Helah were, Zereth, and Jezoar, and Ethnan. 8. And Coz begat Anub, and Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel, the son of Harum. 9. ¶ And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. 10. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested.

One reason, no doubt, why Ezra is here most particular in the register of the tribe of Judah, is, because that tribe was it, which with its appendages, Simeon, Benjamin, and Levi, made up the kingdom of Judah, which not only long survived the other tribes in Canaan, but in process of time, now when this was written, returned out of captivity, when the generality of the other tribes were lost in the kingdom of Assyria.

The remarkable person in this paragraph is Jabez; it is not said whose son he was, nor doth it appear in what age he lived; but it should seem he was the founder of one of the families of Aharhel, mentioned, *ver. 8.* Here is,

1. The reason of his name. His mother gave him the name with this reason, *because I bare him with sorrow*, *ver. 9.* All children are born with sorrow; for so the sentence is upon the woman, *in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children*; but some with much more sorrow than others. Usually the sorrow in bearing, is afterwards forgotten, *for joy that the child is born*: but here it seems it was so extraordinary, that it was remembered when the child came to be circumcised, and care taken to perpetuate the remembrance of it while he lived. Perhaps, the mother called him Jabez as Rachael called her son Ben-oni, when she was dying of the sorrow: or, if she recovered it, yet thus she recorded it, 1. That it might be a continual memorandum to herself to be thankful to God as long as she lived, for supporting her under, and bringing her through that sorrow. It may be of use to be often minded of our sorrows, that we may always have such thoughts of things as we had in the day of our affliction, and may learn to rejoice with trembling. (2.) That it might likewise be a memorandum to him, what this world is into which she bare him, a vale of tears, in which he must expect *few days and full of trouble*: the sorrow he carried in his name might help to put a seriousness upon his spirit. It might also mind him to love and honour his mother, and labour in every thing to be a comfort to her who brought him into the world with so much sorrow. It is piety in children thus to requite their parents, *1 Tim. v. 4.*

2. The eminency of his character: *he was more honourable than his brethren*, qualified above them by the divine grace, and dignified above them by the divine providence: They did virtuously, but he excelled them all. Now the sorrow with which his mother bare him, was abundantly recompenced. That son which of all the rest cost her most dear, she was most happy in, and was made glad in proportion to the affliction, *Psal. xc. 15.* We are not told upon what account he was *more honourable than his brethren*; whether because he raised a greater estate, or was preferred to the magistracy, or signalized himself in war; we have most reason to think it was upon the account of his learning and piety, not only because these above any thing put honour



honour upon a man; but because we have reason to think in these Jabez was eminent. (1.) In learning; because we find that *the families of the scribes dwelt at Jabez*, chap. ii. 55. a city which, it is likely, took its name from this name. The Jews say, he was a famous doctor of the law, and left many disciples behind him. And it should seem by the mentioning of him so abruptly here, that his name was well known when Ezra wrote this. (2.) In piety; because we find here that he was a praying man. His inclination to devotion made him truly honourable; and by prayer he obtained those blessings from God, which added much to his honour. The way to be truly great, is to be truly good, and to pray much.

3. The prayer he made, probably like Solomon's prayer for wisdom, just when he was setting out in the world: he set himself to acknowledge God in all his ways, put himself under the divine blessing and protection, and prospered accordingly. Perhaps, these were the heads on which he enlarged in his daily prayers; to this purpose it was his constant practice to pray alone, and with his family, as Daniel. Some think, it was upon some particular occasion, when he was straitened and threatened by his enemies, that he prayed this prayer. Observe,

1. To whom he prayed; not to any of the gods of the Gentiles: no, he *called on the God of Israel*, the living and true God, who alone can hear and answer prayer; and in prayer had an eye to him as the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, the God with whom Jacob wrestled and prevailed, and was thence called Israel.

2. What was the nature of his prayer. (1.) As the margin reads it, it was a solemn vow, *If thou wilt bless me indeed*, &c. and then the sense is imperfect, but may easily be filled up from Jacob's vow, or some such like, *then thou shalt be my God*. He doth not express his promise, but leaves it to be understood; either because he was afraid to promise in his own strength, or because he resolved to devote himself entirely to God. He doth as it were give God a blank paper, let him write what he pleaseth; Lord, if thou wilt bless me and keep me, do what thou wilt with me, I will be at thy command and dispose for ever. (2.) As the text reads it, it was the language of a most ardent and affectionate desire, *O that thou wouldst bless me!*

3. What was the matter of his prayer. Four things he prayed for: (1.) That God would *bless him indeed*. That *blessing thou wilt bless me*; bless me greatly, with manifold and abundant blessings. Perhaps, he has an eye to the promise God made to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 17. that *in blessing I will bless thee*. Let that blessing of Abraham come upon me. Spiritual blessings are the best blessings; and those are blessed indeed who are blessed with them. God's blessings are real things, and produce real effects. We can but wish a blessing, he commands it: those whom he blesteth are blessed indeed. (2.) That he would *enlarge his coast*; that he would prosper his endeavours for the increase of what fell to his lot, either by work or war. That God would enlarge our hearts, and so enlarge our portion in himself, and in the heavenly Canaan, ought to be our desire and prayer. (3.) That God's *hand might be with him*: The prayer of Moses for this tribe of Judah was, That his own *hands might be sufficient for him*, Deut. xxxiii. 7. but Jabez expects not that, unless he have God's hand with him, and the presence of his power. God's hand with us, to lead us, protect us, strengthen us, and to work all our works in us and for us, is indeed a hand sufficient for us, all-sufficient. (4.) That he would *keep him from evil*; the evil of sin, the evil of trouble, all the evil designs of his enemies, that they might not hurt, not grieve him, not make him a Jabez indeed, a man of sorrow: in the original there is an allusion to his name, *Father in heaven, deliver me from evil*.

4. What was the success of his prayer. *God granted him that which he requested*; prospered him remarkably, and gave him success in his undertakings, in his studies, in his worldly business, in his conflicts with the Canaanites, and so he became *more honourable than his brethren*. God was of old always ready to hear prayer, and *his ear is not yet heavy*.

11. ¶ And Chelub the brother of Shuah, begat Mehir, which *was* the father of Eshton. 12. And Eshton begat Beth-rapha, and Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahath. *These are* the men of Rechab. 13. And the sons of Kenaz; Othniel, and Seraiah: and the sons of Othniel; Hathath. 14. And Meonothai begat Ophra: and Seraiah begat Joab, the father of the valley of Charafhim, for they were craftsmen. 15. And the sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh; Iru, Elah, and Naam: and the sons of Elah, even Kenaz. 16. And the sons of Jehaleleel; Ziph, and Ziphah, Tiria, and Asareel. 17. And the sons of Ezra *were*, Jether, and Mered, and Ephraim, and Jalon: and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. 18. And his wife Jehudijah bare Jared the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel, the father of Zanoah.

And *these are* the sons of Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took. 19. And the sons of *his* wife Hodiah, the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah, the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite. 20. And the sons of Shimon *were*, Amnon, and Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi *were*, Zoheth, and Ben-zoheth. 21. ¶ The sons of Shelah, the son of Judah *were*, Er the father of Lecah, and Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea, 22. And Jokim, and the men of Chozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who had the dominion in Moab, and Jashubilehem. And *these are* ancient things. 23. *These were* the potters, and those that dwelt amongst plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.

We may observe in these verses,

1. That here is a whole family of craftsmen, handicraft tradesmen, that applied themselves to all sorts of manufactures, in which they were ingenious and industrious above their neighbours, *ver.* 14. There was a valley where they lived, which was from them called, *The valley of craftsmen*: They that are craftsmen, are not therefore to be looked upon as mean men: These craftsmen, though two of a trade oft disagree, yet chose to live together, for the improving of arts by comparing notes; and that they might support one another's reputation.

2. That one of these married Pharaoh's daughter, *ver.* 18. that was the common name of the kings of Egypt. If an Israelite in Egypt, before the bondage began, while Joseph's merits were yet fresh in mind, was preferred to be the king's son-in-law, it is not to be thought strange, few Israelites could, like Moses, refuse an alliance with the court.

3. That another is said to be the *father of the house of them that wrought fine linen*, *ver.* 21. It is inserted in their genealogy as their honour, that they were the best weavers in the kingdom, and they brought up their children from one generation to another to the same business, not aiming to make them gentlemen. This Laadah is said to be the *father of them that wrought fine linen*; as before the flood, Jubal is said to be the father of musicians, and Jabal of shepherds, &c. His posterity inhabited the city of Mareshah, the manufacture, or staple commodity of which place was linen cloth, with which their kings and priests were clothed.

4. That another family had had *dominion in Moab*, but were now in *servitude in Babylon*, *ver.* 22, 23. (1.) It was found among the *ancient things*, that they had the *dominion in Moab*, probably in David's time, when that country was conquered, they transplanted themselves thither, and were put in places of power there, which they held for several generations; but this was a great while ago, time out of mind. (2.) Their posterity were now potters and gardeners, as is supposed, in Babylon, where they *dwelt with the king for his work*, got a good livelihood by their industry, and therefore cared not for returning with their brethren to their own land, after the years of captivity were expired. They that now have dominion, know not what their posterity may be reduced to, nor what mean employments they may be glad to take up with. But they were unworthy the name of Israelites, that would dwell among *plants and hedges*, rather than be at the pains to return to Canaan.

24. ¶ The sons of Simeon *were*, Nemuel, and Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul: 25. Shallum his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. 26. And the sons of Mishma; Hamuel his son, Zacchur his son, Shimei his son. 27. And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brethren had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah. 28. And they dwelt at Beer-sheba, and Moladah, and Hazar-shual, 29. And at Bilhah, and at Ezen, and at Tolad, 30. And at Bethuel, and at Hormah, and at Ziklag, 31. And at Beth-mercaboth, and Hazar-susim, and at Beth-bieri, and at Shaaraim: *These were* their cities, unto the reign of David. 32. And their villages *were*, Etam, and Ain, Rimmon, and Tochen, and Ashan, five cities. 33. And all their villages that *were* round about the same cities, unto Baal. *These were* their habitations, and their genealogy. 34. And Meshobab, and Jamlech, and Joshah, the son of Amaziah, 35. And Joel, and Jehu the son of Josibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel, 36. And Elioenai, and Jaakobah, and Jeshohaiah, and Asaiah, and Adiel, and Jesmiel, and Benaiah, 37. And Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son Shemaiah. 38. *These mentioned by their names, were* princes in their families: and the house of their fathers increased greatly. 39. ¶ And they went



to the entrance of Gedor, *even* unto the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. 40. And they found fat pasture and good, and the land *was* wide, and quiet, and peaceable: for *they* of Ham had dwelt there of old. 41. And these written by name, came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found there, and destroyed them utterly unto this day, and dwelt in their rooms: because *there was* pasture there for their flocks. 42. And *some* of them, *even* of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men, went to mount Seir, having for their captains Pelatiah, and Neariah, and Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ithi. 43. And they smote the rest of the Amalekites that were escaped, and dwelt there unto this day.

We have here some of the genealogies of the tribe of Simeon, (though it was not a tribe of any great note) especially the princes of that tribe, *ver.* 38. Of this tribe it is said, that they *increased greatly*, but *not like to the children of Judah*, *ver.* 27. They whom God increaseth ought to be thankful, though they see others that are more increased.

Here is, 1. The cities allotted them, *ver.* 28. Of which see *Josh.* xix. 1, &c. when it is said, they were theirs *unto the reign of David*, it intimates, that when the ten tribes revolted from the house of David, many of the Simeonites quitted these cities, because they lay within Judah, and seated themselves elsewhere.

2. The ground they got elsewhere. When those of this tribe that revolted from the house of David were carried captive with the rest into Assyria, those that adhered to Judah were remarkably owned of God, and prospered in their endeavours to enlarge their coasts. It was in the days of Hezekiah that a generation of Simeonites, whose tribe had long sneaked and truckled, was spirited to make these bold efforts. 1. Some of them attacked a place in Arabia, (as it should seem) called *the entrance of Gedor*, inhabited by the posterity of cursed Ham, *ver.* 40. made themselves masters of it, and dwelt there. This adds to the glory of Hezekiah's pious reign, that as his kingdom in general prospered, so did particular families. It is said, they found fat pastures, and yet *the land was quiet*; even then when the kings of Assyria were giving disturbance to all their neighbours, this land escaped their alarms: the inhabitants being shepherds, that molested none, were not themselves molested, till the Simeonites came and drove them out, and succeeded them not only in the plenty, but in the peace of their land. Those that thus dwelt, (as we do) in a fruitful country, and whose land is wide, and quiet, and peaceable, have reason to own themselves indebted to that God, who *appoints the bounds of our habitation*. 2. Others of them, to the number of five hundred, under the command of four brethren, here named, made a descent upon mount Seir, and smote the remainders of the devoted Amalekites, and took possession of their country, *ver.* 42, 43. Now the curses on Ham and Amalek had a further accomplishment, when they seemed dormant, if not dead: As had also the curse on Simeon, that he should be divided and scattered, *Gen.* xlix. 7. yet to him it was turned into a blessing; for the families of Simeon, that thus transplanted themselves into those distant countries, are said to *dwell there unto this day*, *ver.* 43. by which it should seem they escaped the calamities of the captivity. Providence sometimes sends those out of trouble that are designed for preservation.

## C H A P. V.

*This chapter gives us some account of the two tribes and a half that were seated on the other side Jordan.* (1.) Of Reuben, *ver.* 1—10. (2.) Of Gad, *ver.* 11—17. (3.) Of the half tribe of Manasseh, *ver.* 23, 24. Concerning all three acting in conjunction, we are told, 1. How they conquered the Hagarites, *ver.* 18—22. 2. How they were at length themselves conquered, and made captives by the king of Assyria, because they had forsaken God, *ver.* 25, 26.

1. **N**OW the sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel (for he *was* the first-born, but forasmuch as he defiled his fathers bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. 2. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler, but the birthright *was* Joseph's) 3. The sons *I say*, of Reuben the first-born of Israel *were* Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 4. The sons of Joel; Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, 5. Micah his son, Reaia his son, Baal his son, 6. Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pilnezer king of Assyria, carried away captive: he *was* prince of the Reubenites. 7. And his brethren by their families (when the genealogy of  
No. 29.

their generations was reckoned) *were* the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, 8. And Bela the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who dwelt in Aroer, even unto Nebo, and Baal-meon. 9. And eastward he inhabited unto the entering in of the wilderness from the river Euphrates: because their cattle was multiplied in the land of Gilead. 10. And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand: and dwelt in their tents throughout all the east-land of Gilead. 11. ¶ And the children of Gad dwelt over against them, in the land of Bashan unto Salcah: 12. Joel the chief, and Shapham the next, and Jaanai, and Shaphat in Bashan. 12. And their brethren of the house of their fathers *were*, Michael, Meshullam, and Sheba, and Jorai, and Jachan, and Zia, and Heber, seven. 14. These *are* the children of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son Jeshihai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz; 15. Ahi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, chief of the house of their fathers. 16. And they dwelt in Gilead in Bashan, and in her towns, and in all the suburbs of Sharon, upon their borders. 17. All these were reckoned by genealogies in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel.

We have here an extract out of the genealogies,

1. Of the tribe of Reuben; where we have, (1.) The reason why this tribe is thus postponed; it is confessed he was the first-born of Israel, and upon that account might challenge the precedence, but he forfeited his birthright by defiling his father's concubine, and was for that sentenced *not to excel*, *Gen.* xlix. 4. Sin lessens men, thrusts them down from their excellency; seventh commandment sins especially, leave an indelible stain upon mens names and families, a reproach which time shall not wipe away. Reuben's seed to the last bear the disgrace of Reuben's sin. Yet though that tribe was degraded, it was not discarded, or disinherited: the futility of the honour of an Israelite, is not the losing of his happiness. Reuben loses his birth-right, yet it doth not devolve upon Simeon, the next in order, for it was typical, and therefore must attend not the course of nature, but the choice of grace. The advantages of the birthright, were dominion, and a double portion; Reuben having forfeited these, it was thought too much, that both should be transferred to any one, and therefore they were divided. (1.) Joseph had the double portion; for two tribes descended from him, Ephraim and Manasseh, that had each of them a child's part; for so Jacob by faith blessed them, *Heb.* xi. 21. *Gen.* xlviii. 15, 22. and each of those two was as considerable, and made as good a figure as any one of the twelve, except Judah. But, (2.) Judah had the dominion, on him the dying patriarch entailed the scepter, *Gen.* xlix. 10. Of him came the chief ruler, David first, and in the fulness of time Messiah the prince, *Mic.* v. 2. This honour was secured to Judah, though the birthright was Joseph's, and having this, he needed not envy him the double portion.

2. The genealogy of the princes of this tribe, the topping family of it (yet many, no doubt, omitted) to Beerah, who was head of this clan when the king of Assyria carried them captive, *ver.* 4—6. Perhaps he is mentioned as prince of the Reubenites at that time, because he did not do his part to prevent it.

3. The enlargement of the coasts of this tribe: they increasing, and their cattle being multiplied, they crowded out their neighbours the Hagarites, and extended their conquests, though not to the river Euphrates, yet to the wilderness which butted upon that river, *ver.* 9, 10. Thus God did for his people as he promised them, he cast out the enemy from before them by little and little, and gave them their land as they had occasion for it, *Exod.* xxiii. 30.

2. Of the tribe of Gad; some great families of that tribe are here named, *ver.* 12. Seven that were the children of Abihail, whose pedigree is carried upwards from the son to the father, *ver.* 14, 15. as that, *ver.* 4, 5. is brought downward from father to son. These genealogies were perfected in the days of Jotham king of Judah, but were begun some years before, in the reign of Jeroboam II. king of Israel. What particular reason there was for taking these accounts then, doth not appear; but it was just before they were carried away captive by the Assyrians, as appears, 2 *Kings* xv. 29, 32. When the judgments of God were ready to break out against them for their wretched degeneracy and apostasy, then were they priding themselves in their genealogies, that they were the *children of the covenant*; as the Jews in our Saviour's time, who, when they were ripe for ruin, boasted, *We have Abraham to our father*. Or, there might be a special providence in it, and a favourable intimation, that though they were for the present cast out, they were not cast off for ever; what we design to call for hereafter, we keep an inventory of.



18. ¶ The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, *were* four and forty thousand and seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war. 19. And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab. 20. And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that *were* with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them, because they put their trust in him. 21. And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand. 22. For there fell down many slain, because the war *was* of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity. 23. ¶ And the children of the half-tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baal-hermon, and Senir, and unto mount Hermon. 24. And these *were* the heads of the house of their fathers, even Ephraim, and Ithi, and Eliel, and Azriel, and Jeremiah, and Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty men of valour, famous men, and heads of the house of their fathers. 25. ¶ And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. 26. And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilezer king of Assyria, and he carried them away (even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

The heads of the half tribe of Manasseh that were seated on the other side Jordan, are named here, *ver.* 23, 24. Their lot at first was Bashan only; but afterwards they increased so much in wealth and power, that they spread far north, even unto Hermon.

But two things are here recorded concerning these tribes on the other side Jordan, in which they all went partners. They all shared,

1. In a glorious victory over the Hagarites, so the Ishmaelites were now called, to mind them that they were the *sons of the bond-woman* that were *cast out*. We are not told when this victory was obtained, whether it be the same with that of the Reubenites, which is said, *ver.* 12. to be *in the days of Saul*, or whether that success of one of these tribes, animated and excited the other two to join with them in another expedition, is not certain. It seems, though in Saul's time the common interests of the kingdom were weak and low, some of the tribes that acted separately did well for themselves. We are here told, (1.) What a brave army these frontier tribes brought into the field against the Hagarites, forty four thousand men and upwards, all strong and stout, and skilful in war; so many effective men, that knew how to manage their weapons, *ver.* 18. How much more considerable might Israel have been than they were in the time of the Judges, if all the tribes had acted in conjunction? (2.) What courage they took to engage God for them, they *cried to God*, and *put their trust in him*, *ver.* 20. Now they acted as Israelites indeed. (3.) As the seed of believing Abraham, they *put their trust in God*; though they had a powerful army, they relied not on that, but on the divine power. They depended on the commission they had from God to wage war with their neighbours for the enlarging of their coasts, if there was occasion, even with those that were very far off, besides the devoted nations: see *Deut.* xx. 15. They depended on God's providence to give them success. (4.) As the seed of praying Jacob, they *cried unto God*, especially *in the battle*, when, perhaps, at first they were in danger of being overpowered; see the like done, *2 Cor.* xiii. 14. In distress God expects we should *cry to him*; *Galatians* upon us for this tribute, this rent: in our spiritual conflicts we must look up to heaven for strength; and it is the believing prayer that will be the prevailing prayer. (5.) We are told what success they had. *God was intreated of them*, though need drove them to him, so ready is he to hear and answer prayer: They were helped against their enemies; for God never yet failed any that trusted in him. And then they routed the enemies army, though far superior in number to theirs, slew many, *ver.* 21. took one hundred thousand prisoners, enriched themselves greatly with the spoil, and settled themselves in their country, *ver.* 21, 22. And all this, because the *war was of God*, undertaken in his fear, and carried on in a dependence upon him. If the battle be the Lord's, there is reason to hope it will be successful. Then we may expect to prosper in any enterprise, and then only, when we take God along with us.

2. They shared, at length, in an inglorious captivity. Had they kept close to God and their duty, they had continued to enjoy both their ancient lot and their new conquests; but they *transgressed against the God of their fathers*, *ver.* 25. they lay upon the borders, and conversed most with the neighbour nations, by which means they learned their idolatrous usages, and transmitted the infection to the other tribes; for this God had a controversy with them: he was a *husband to them*, and no marvel his jealousy burnt like fire, when they *went a whoring after other gods*; justly is a bill of divorce given to the adulterers: *God stirred up the spirit of the kings of Assyria*, first one, and then another against them, served his own purposes by the designs of those ambitious monarchs, employed them to chastise those revolvers first, and when that reduced them not, then wholly to root them out, *ver.* 26. These tribes were first placed, and they were first displaced. They would have the best land, not considering that it lay most exposed. But those who are governed more by sense than by reason or faith in their choices, may expect to fare accordingly.

## C H A P. VI.

*Though Joseph and Judah shared between them the forfeited honours of the birth-right, yet Levi was first, of all the tribes, dignified and distinguished with an honour more valuable than either the precedence or the double portion, and that was the priesthood. That tribe God set apart for himself; it was Moses's tribe, and perhaps for his sake was thus favoured. Of that tribe we have an account in this chapter: (1.) Their pedigree: the first fathers of the tribe, ver. 1—3. The line of the priests from Aaron to the captivity, ver. 4—15. and of some other of their families, ver. 16—30. (2.) Their work; the work of the Levites, ver. 31—48. Of the priests, ver. 49—53. (3.) The cities appointed them in the land of Canaan, ver. 54—81.*

1. **T**HE sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 2. And the sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 3. And the children of Amram; Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam. The sons also of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 4. ¶ Eleazar begat Phinehas, Phinehas begat Abishua. 5. And Abishua begat Bukki, and Bukki begat Uzzi. 6. And Uzzi begat Zerariah, and Zerariah begat Meraioth. 7. Meraioth begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub. 8. And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Ahimaaz. 9. And Ahimaaz begat Azariah, and Azariah begat Johanan. 10. And Johanan begat Azariah (he *is* that executed the priests office, in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem) 11. And Azariah begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub. 12. And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Shallum. 13. And Shallum begat Hilkiyah, and Hilkiyah begat Azariah. 14. And Azariah begat Seraiah, and Seraiah begat Jehozadak. 15. And Jehozadak went *into captivity*, when the LORD carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. 16. ¶ The sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 17. And these *be* the names of the sons of Gershon; Libni, and Shimei. 18. And the sons of Kohath *were*, Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 19. The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Musi. And these *are* the families of the Levites according to their fathers. 20. Of Gershon; Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, 21. Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeaterai his son. 22. The sons of Kohath; Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son. 23. Elkanah his son, and Ebiasaph his son, and Assir his son. 24. Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziel his son, and Shaul his son. 25. And the sons of Elkanah, Amasai, and Ahimoth. 26. *As for Elkanah*: the sons of Elkanah; Zophai his son, and Nahath his son. 27. Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. 28. And the sons of Samuel; the first-born Vashni, and Abiah. 29. The sons of Merari; Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzza his son. 30. Shimea his son, Haggaiyah his son, Asaiah his son.

The priests and Levites were more concerned than any other Israelites to preserve their pedigree clear, and to be able to prove it; because all the honours and privileges of their office depended upon their descent: and we read of those, who though perhaps they really were *children of the priests*, yet because they could not find the register of their genealogies, nor make out their descent



scant by any authentick record, they were, *as polluted, put from the priesthood*, and forbidden to eat of the holy things, *Ezra* ii. 62, 63.

It is but very little that is here recorded of the genealogies of this sacred tribe.

1. The first fathers of it are here named twice, *ver. 1, 16*. Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, were three names we were very conversant with in the book of Numbers, when the families of the Levites were marshalled, and had their work assigned them. Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam, we have known much more of than their names, and cannot pass them over here without remembring, that *this was that Moses and Aaron*, whom God honoured in making them instruments of Israel's deliverance and settlement, and *figures of him that was to come*; Moses as a prophet, and Aaron as a priest. And the mention of Nadab and Abihu here, (though having no children, there was no occasion to bring them into the genealogy) cannot but mind us of the terrors of that divine justice, which they were made monuments of for offering strange fire, that we may always fear before him.

2. The line of Eleazar, the successor of Aaron, is here drawn down to the time of the captivity, *ver. 4—15*. It begins with Eleazar, who came out of the house of bondage in Egypt, and ends with Jehozadak, who went into the house of bondage in Babylon. Thus, for their sins, they were left as they were found; which might also intimate, that the Levitical priesthood made nothing perfect; that was to be done by the *bringing in of a better hope*. All these here named were not high priests, for in the time of the Judges, that dignity was upon some occasion or other brought into the family of Ithamar, of which Eli was; but in Zadok it returned again to the right line. Of Azariah it is here said, *ver. 10*. *He it is that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built*. It is supposed, this was that Azariah who bravely opposed the presumption of king Uzziah when he invaded the priest's office, *2 Chron. xxvi. 17*. though he ventured his neck by it: This was done like a priest, like one that was truly zealous for his God; he that thus boldly maintained and defended the priests office, and made good its barriers against such a daring insult, may well be said to execute it; and this honour is put upon him for it; while Urijah, one of his successors, for a base compliance with king Ahaz in building him an idolatrous altar, has the disgrace put upon him of being left out of this genealogy; as perhaps some others are. But some think, that this remark upon this Azariah, should have been added to his grandfather of the same name, *ver. 9*. who was the son of Ahimaaz, and that that was he, who first officiated in Solomon's temple.

3. Some other of the families of the Levites are here accounted for. One of the families of Gershon, *viz.* that of Libni, is here drawn down as far as Samuel, who had the honour of a prophet added to that of a Levite. One of the families of Merari, *viz.* that of Mahli, is likewise drawn down for some descents, *ver. 29, 30*.

31. And these *are they* whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest. 32. And they ministred before the dwelling-place of the tabernacle of the congregation, with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and *then* they waited on their office, according to their order. 33. And these *are they* that waited with their children: of the sons of the Kohathites; Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel, 34. The son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah, 35. The son of Zuph, the son of Elkannah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai, 36. The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah, 37. The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, 38. The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel. 39. And his brother Asaph (who stood on his right hand) *even* Asaph the son of Berechiah, the son of Shimea, 40. The son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchiah, 41. The son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah, 42. The son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei, 43. The son of Jahath, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi. 44. And their brethren the sons of Merari, *stood* on the left hand: Ethan, the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch. 45. The son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiyah, 46. The son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer, 47. The son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi. 48. Their brethren also the Levites *were* appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God. 49. ¶ But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of

the burnt-offering, and on the altar of incense, *and were appointed* for all the work of the *place* most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 50. And these *are* the sons of Aaron; Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, 51. Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerariah his son, 52. Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, 53. Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

When the Levites were first ordained in the wilderness, much of the work then appointed them, lay in carrying and taking care of the tabernacle, and the utensils of it, while they were in their march through the wilderness. In David's time their number was increased; and though the greater part of them was dispersed all the nation over; to teach the people the good knowledge of the Lord, yet of those that attended the house of God, there was not constant work for them all; and therefore David, by special commission and direction from God, new modelled the Levites, as we shall find in the latter part of this book. Here we are told what the work was which he assigned them.

1. Singing-work, *ver. 3*. David was raised up on high to be the sweet-psalmist of Israel, *2 Sam. xxiii. 1*. not only to pen psalms, but to appoint the singing of them in the house of the Lord, (not so much because he was musical, as because he was devout) and this he did *after that the ark had rest*: while that was in captivity, obscurity, and unsettled, the harps were hung upon the willow-trees, singing was then thought unseasonable; when the bridegroom is taken away, they shall fast: but the harps being resumed, and the songs revived at the *bringing up of the ark*, they were continued afterwards; for we should rejoice as much in the prolonging of our spiritual privileges as in the restoring of them. When the service of the ark was very much superseded by its rest, they had other work cut out for them, (for Levites should never be idle) and were employed in the service of song. Thus when the people of God come to the rest which remains for them above, they shall take leave of all their burthens, and be employed in everlasting songs. These singers kept up that service in the tabernacle till the temple was built, and then they *waited on their office there*, *ver. 32*. When they came to that stately magnificent house, they kept as close both to their office and to their order, as they had done in the tabernacle. It is pity the preferment of the Levites should ever make them remiss in their business.

We have here an account of the three great masters who were employed in the service of the sacred song, each with their respective families; for they *waited with their children*, *i. e.* such as descended from them, or were allied to them, *ver. 33*. Heman, Asaph and Ethan, were the three that were appointed to this service; one of each of the three houses of the Levites, that there might be an equality in the distribution of this work and honour, and each knew his post; such an admirable order was there in this quire-service.

(1.) Of the house of Kohath, was Heman and his family, *ver. 33*. a man of a sorrowful spirit, if it be the same Heman that penned the eighty eighth psalm, and yet a singer. He was the grandson of Samuel the prophet, the son of Joel, of whom it is said, that *he walked not in the ways of Samuel*, *1 Sam. viii. 2, 3*. but, it seems, though the son did not, the grandson did: thus doth the blessing entailed on the seed of the upright, sometimes skip over one generation, and fasten upon the next. And this Heman, though the grandson of that mighty prince, did not think it below him to be a precentor in the house of God; David himself was willing to have been a door-keeper. Rather, we may look upon this preferment of the grandson in the church, as a recompence for the humble modest resignation which the grandfather made of his authority in the state. Many such ways God has of making up his peoples losses, and balancing their disgraces. Perhaps David, in making Heman the chief, had some respect to his old friend Samuel.

(2.) Of the house of Gershon was Asaph, called his brother, because in the same office, and of the same tribe, though of another family; he was posted on Heman's right hand in the quire, *ver. 39*. Several of the psalms bear his name, either penned by him, or tuned by him, as the chief musician. It is plain, he was the penman of some psalms; for we read of those that praised the Lord in the words of David, and of Asaph, for he was a *scer*, as well as a singer, *2 Chron. xxix. 30*. His pedigree is run up here through names utterly unknown, as high as Levi, *ver. 39—43*.

(3.) Of the house of Merari was Ethan, *ver. 44*. who was appointed to Heman's left hand. His pedigree is also run up to Levi, *ver. 47*. If these were the Heman and Ethan that penned the eighty eighth and eighty ninth psalms, there appears no reason here why they should be called Ezrahites, as there doth why those should be called so, who are mentioned *chap. ii. 6*.

2. There was serving-work, abundance of service to be done in the tabernacle of the house of God, *ver. 48*. to provide water and



and fuel; to wash and sweep, and carry out ashes; to kill and slay, and boil the sacrifices; and to all such services there were Levites appointed, those of other families, or perhaps those that were not fit to be singers, that had either no good voice, or no good ear: *As every one has received the gift, so let him minister.* They that could not sing, must not therefore be laid aside as good for nothing; though they were not fit for that service, there was other service they might be useful in.

3. There was sacrificing work, and that was to be done by the priests only, *ver. 49.* They only were to sprinkle the blood, and burn the incense; and for *the work of the place most holy*, that was to be done by the high priest only. Each had his work, and they both needed one another, and helped one another in it. Concerning the work of the priests, we are here told, (1.) What was the end they were to have in their eye, they were to *make an atonement for Israel.* To mediate between the people and God: not to magnify and enrich themselves, but to serve the publick; they were *ordained for men.* (2.) What was the rule they were to have in their eye; they presided in God's house, yet must do as they were bidden, according to all that God commanded. That law the highest are subject to.

54. ¶ Now these are their dwelling-places throughout their castles in their coasts of the sons of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites: for theirs was the lot. 55. And they gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, and the suburbs thereof round about it. 56. But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 57. And to the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of Judah, *namely*, Hebron *the city of refuge*, and Libnah, with her suburbs, and Jattir, and Eshtemoah, with their suburbs, 58. And Hilen with her suburbs, Debir with her suburbs, 59. And Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs: 60. And out of the tribe of Benjamin: Geba with her suburbs, and Alemeth with her suburbs, and Anathoth with her suburbs. All their cities throughout their families were thirteen cities. 61. And unto the sons of Kohath, which were left of the family of that tribe, were cities given out of the half-tribe, *namely*, out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, by lot, ten cities. 62. And to the sons of Gershon throughout their families, out of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. 63. Unto the sons of Merari, were given by lot, throughout their families, out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. 64. And the children of Israel gave to the Levites these cities, with their suburbs. 65. And they gave by lot out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, and out of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, these cities, which are called by their names. 66. And the residue of the families of the sons of Kohath, had cities of their coasts, out of the tribe of Ephraim. 67. And they gave unto them of the cities of refuge, Sechem in mount Ephraim, with her suburbs: they gave also Gezer with her suburbs, 68. And Jokmeam with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs, 69. And Aijalon with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs: 70. And out of the half-tribe of Manasseh; Aner with her suburbs, and Bileam with her suburbs, for the family of the remnant of the sons of Kohath. 71. Unto the sons of Gershon were given out of the family of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan, with her suburbs, and Ashtaroth with her suburbs: 72. And out of the tribe of Issachar; Kedesh with her suburbs, Daberath with her suburbs, 73. And Ramoth with her suburbs, and Anem with her suburbs: 74. And out of the tribe of Asher; Mashal with her suburbs, and Abdon with her suburbs, 75. And Hukok with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs: 76. And out of the tribe of Naphtali; Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, and Hammon with her suburbs, and Kirjathaim with her suburbs. 77. Unto the rest of the children of Merari were given out of the tribe of Zebulun, Rimmon with her suburbs, Tabor with her suburbs: 78. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho, on the east-side of Jordan were given them out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer in the wilderness with her suburbs, and Jahvah with her suburbs, 79. Kedemoth also with her suburbs, and Me-

phaath with her suburbs: 80. And out of the tribe of Gad; Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, and Mahanaim with her suburbs, 81. And Heshbon with her suburbs, and Jazer with her suburbs.

We have here an account of the Levites cities; their castles they are here called, *ver. 54.* not only because walled and fortified, and well guarded by the country; for it is the interest of any nation to protect their ministers, but because they and their possessions were in a particular manner the care of the divine providence: As God was their portion, so God was their protection; and a cottage will be a castle to those that abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

This account is much the same with that which we had *Josh. xxi.* We need not be critical in comparing them, what good will it do us? nor will it do any hurt to the credit of the holy scripture, if the names of some of the places be not just the same here that they were there. We know, it is common for cities to have several names, Sarum and Salisbury, Salop and Shrewsbury, are more unlike than Helen, *ver. 55.* and Holon, *Josh. xxi. 15.* Ashan, *ver. 59.* and Ain, *Josh. xxi. 16.* Alemeth and Almon, *Josh. xxi. 18.* And time changeth names.

We are only to observe, that in this appointment of cities for the Levites, God took care, (1.) For the accomplishment of dying Jacob's prediction concerning this tribe, that it should be scattered in Israel, *Gen. xlix. 7.* (2.) For the diffusing of the knowledge of himself and his law, to all parts of the land of Israel: every tribe had Levites cities in it, and so every room was furnished with a candle, so that none could be ignorant of his duty, but it was either his own fault or the Levites. (3.) For a comfortable maintenance for those that ministered in holy things. Besides their tithes and offerings they had glebe lands, and cities of their own to dwell in. Some of the most considerable cities of Israel fell to the Levites lot. Every tribe had benefit by the Levites, and therefore every tribe must contribute to their support. Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth him, and do it cheerfully.

## C H A P. VII.

In this chapter we have some account of the genealogies, (1.) Of Issachar, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) Of Benjamin, *ver. 6—12.* (3.) Of Naphtali, *ver. 13.* (4.) Of Manasseh, *ver. 14—19.* (5.) Of Ephraim, *ver. 20—29.* (6.) Of Asher, *ver. 30—40.* Here is no account either of Zebulun or Dan. Why they only should be omitted, we can assign no reason, only it is the disgrace of the tribe of Dan, that idolatry began in that colony of the Danites which planted in Laish, and called it Dan, and there one of the golden calves was set up by Jeroboam. Dan is omitted, *Rev. vii.*

1. **N**OW the sons of Issachar were Tola, and Puah, Jashub, and Shimron, four. 2. And the sons of Tola; Uzzi, and Rephaiah, and Jeriel, and Jahmai, and Jibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their fathers house, to wit, of Tola: they were valiant men of might in their generations; whose number was in the days of David two and twenty thousand and six hundred. 3. And the sons of Uzzi; Izrahiah: and the sons of Izrahiah; Michael, and Obadiah, and Joel, Ishiah, five: all of them chief men. 4. And with them, by their generations, after the house of their fathers were bands of soldiers for war, six and thirty thousand men: for they had many wives and sons. 5. And their brethren among all the families of Issachar, were valiant men of might, reckoned in all by their genealogies, fourscore and seven thousand. 6. ¶ The sons of Benjamin; Bela, and Becher, and Jediel, three. 7. And the sons of Bela; Ezbon, and Uzzi, and Uzziel, and Jerimoth, and Iri, five; heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour, and were reckoned by their genealogies, twenty and two thousand and thirty and four. 8. And the sons of Becher; Zemira, and Joash, and Eliezer, and Elieonai, and Omri, and Jerimoth, and Abiah, and Anathoth, and Alemeth. All these are the sons of Becher. 9. And the number of them after their genealogy by their generation, heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour, was twenty thousand and two hundred. 10. The sons also of Jediel; Bilhan: and the sons of Bilhan; Jeush, and Benjamin, and Ehud, and Chenaanah, and Zethan, and Tharshish, and Ahishabar. 11. All these the sons of Jediel, by the heads of their fathers, mighty men of valour, were seventeen thousand and two hundred soldiers, fit to go for war and battle. 12. Shuppin also,



also, and Huppin, the children of Ir, and Hushim, the sons of Aher. 13. ¶ The sons of Naphtali; Jahziel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shallum the sons of Bilhah. 14. ¶ The sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom she bare: (but his concubine the Aramites bare Machir the father of Gilead: 15. And Machir took to wife the sister of Huppin, and Shuppin, whose sisters name was Maacah) and the name of the second was Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters. 16. And Maachah the wife of Machir bare a son, and she called his name Peresh; and the name of his brother was Sheresh; and his sons were Ulam, and Rakem. 17. And the sons of Ulam; Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh. 18. And his sister Hammoleketh bare Ishod, and Abiezer, and Mahalah. 19. And the sons of Shemida were, Ahiah, and Sechem, and Likhi, and Aniam.

We have here a short view given us,

1. Of the tribe of Issachar, whom Jacob had compared to a strong ass couching between two burthens, Gen. xlix. 14. an industrious tribe, that minded their country business very close, and rejoiced in their tents, Deut. xxxiii. 18. and here it appears, (1.) That they were a numerous tribe, for they had many wives; so fruitful their country was, that they saw no danger of overstocking the pasture, and so ingenious the people were, that they could find work for all hands. Let no people complain of their numbers, provided they suffer none to be idle. (2.) That they were a valiant tribe; men of might, ver. 2, 5. chief men, ver. 3. They that were inured to labour and business, were of all other the fittest to serve their country when there was occasion. The numbers of the respective families, as taken in the days of David, are here set down, amounting in the whole to above one hundred forty five thousand men fit for war. The account is supposed to be taken when Joab numbred the people, 2 Sam. xxiv. But I rather think it refers to some other computation that was made perhaps among themselves, because it is said, 1 Chron. xxvii. 24. that that account was not inserted into the chronicles of king David, it having offended God.

2. Of the tribe of Benjamin; some account is given of this tribe here, but a much larger in the next chapter. The militia of this tribe scarce reaches to sixty thousand; but they are said to be mighty men of valour, ver. 7, 9, 11. Benjamin shall raven as a wolf, Gen. xlix. 27. It was the honour of this tribe, that it produced Saul the first king, and more its honour that it adhered to the rightful kings of the house of David, when the other tribes revolted.

Here is mention, ver. 12. of Hushim the sons of Aher. The sons of Dan are said to be Hushim, Gen. xlii. 23. and therefore some read Aher appellatively, Hushim the sons of another; i. e. another of Jacob's sons; or the sons of a stranger, other than an Israelite should be; for so the Danites were, when they set up Micah's graven and molten image among them.

3. Of the tribe of Naphtali, ver. 13. The first fathers of that tribe are only named the very same that we find, Gen. xlii. 24. only that Shilem there, is Shallum here. None of their descendants are named, perhaps, because their genealogies were lost.

4. Of the tribe of Manasseh, that part of it which was seated within Jordan, for of the other part we had some account before, chap. v. 23. Of this tribe, observe, (1.) That one of them married an Aramite, i. e. a Syrian, ver. 14. This was during their bondage in Egypt, so early did they begin to mingle themselves with the nations. (2.) That though the father married a Syrian, Machir the son of that marriage, perhaps seeing the inconvenience of it in his father's house, took to wife a daughter of Benjamin, ver. 15. It is good for the children to take warning by their fathers mistakes, and not stumble at the same stone. (3.) Here is mention of Bedan, ver. 17. who perhaps is the same with that Bedan, who is mentioned as one of Israel's deliverers, 1 Sam. xii. 11. Jair perhaps, who was of Manasseh, Judges x. 3. was the man.

20. ¶ And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bered his son, Tahath his son, and Eledah his son, and Tahath his son, 21. ¶ And Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. 22. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him. 23. ¶ And when he went in to his wife, she conceived and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house. 24. (And his daughter was Sherah, who built Beth-horon the nether, and the upper, and Uzzen-sherah) 25. And Rephah was his No. 29.

son, also Resheph, and Telah his son, and Tahan his son, 26. Laadan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son, 27. Non his son, Jehoshua his son. 28. ¶ And their possessions and habitations were Beth-el, and the towns thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer with the towns thereof, Sechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the towns thereof: 29. And by the borders of the children of Manasseh, Beth-shean and her towns, Taanach and her towns, Megiddo and her towns, Dor and her towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph the son of Israel. 30. ¶ The sons of Asher; Imnah, and Isuah, and Ishuai, and Beriah, and Serah their sister. 31. And the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel, who is the father of Birzavith. 32. And Heber begat Japhlet, and Shomer, and Hotham, and Shua their sister. 33. And the sons of Japhlet; Pasach, and Bimhal, and Ashvath: these are the children of Japhlet. 34. And the sons of Shamer; Ahi, and Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram. 35. And the sons of his brother Helem, Zophah, and Imna, and Shelesh, and Amal. 36. The sons of Zophah; Suah, and Harnepher, and Shual, and Beri, and Imrah, 37. Bezer, and Hod, and Shamma, and Shilsha, and Ithran, and Beera. 38. And the sons of Jether; Jephunneh, and Pispah, and Ara. 39. And the sons of Ulla; Arah, and Haniel, and Rezia. 40. All these were the children of Asher, heads of their fathers house, choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes. And the number throughout the genealogy of them, that were apt to the war, and to battle, was twenty and six thousand men.

We have here an account,

1. Of the tribe of Ephraim. Great things we read of that tribe, when it came to maturity: Here we have an account of the disasters of its infancy, while it was in Egypt, as it should seem, for Ephraim himself was alive when those things were done, which yet is hard to imagine, if it were, as is here computed, seven generations off. Therefore I am apt to think, either it was another Ephraim, or that those who were slain were the immediate sons of that Ephraim that was the son of Joseph. In this passage, which is here only related, we have,

(1.) The great breach that was made upon the family of Ephraim. The men of Gath, Philistines, giants, slew many of the sons of that family, because they came down to take away their cattle, ver. 21. It is uncertain who were the aggressors here.

1. Some make the men of Gath the aggressors, men born in the land of Egypt, but now resident in Gath, that they came down into the land of Goshen, to drive away the Ephraimites cattle, and slew the owners, because they stood up in the defence of them. Many a man's life has been exposed and betrayed by his wealth; so far is it from being a strong city. 2. Others think the Ephraimites made a descent upon the men of Gath to plunder them, presuming that the time was come when they should be put in possession of Canaan; but they paid dear for their rashness and precipitation. They that will not wait God's time, cannot expect God's blessing. I rather think the men of Gath came down upon the Ephraimites, because the Israelites in Egypt were shepherds, not soldiers; abounded in cattle of their own, and therefore not likely to venture their lives for their neighbours cattle: and the words may be read, the men of Gath slew them, for they came down to take away their cattle. Zabad the son of Ephraim, and Shuthelah, and Ezer, and Elead his grand-children, were the men that were slain; as Dr. Lightfoot thinks. Jacob had foretold that the seed of Ephraim should become a multitude of nations, Gen. xlviii. 19. and yet that plant is thus nipped in the bud. God's providence oft seems to contradict his promises, but when they do so, they really magnify the promise, and make the performance of it notwithstanding so much the more illustrious. The Ephraimites were the posterity of Joseph, and yet his power could not protect them, though some think he was yet living. The sword devours one as well as another.

(2.) The great grief which oppressed the father of the family hereupon. Ephraim mourned many days. Nothing brings gray hairs to the grave with more sorrow, than their following the green heads that descend from them to the grave first; especially if in blood. It is oft the burthen of those that live to be old, that they see those go before them, of whom they said, These same shall comfort us. It was a brotherly, friendly office which his brethren did, when they came to comfort him under this great affliction, to express their sympathy with him, and concern for him, and to suggest that to him which would support and quiet him under this sad providence. Probably, they minded him of the promise of increase with which Jacob had blessed him, when he laid his right hand upon his head: al-



though his house was not so with God as he hoped, but a house of mourning, a shattered family, yet that promise was sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

(3.) The repair of this breach, in some measure, by the addition of another son to his family in his old age, ver. 23. like Seth, *another seed instead of that of Abel whom Cain slew*, Gen. iv. 25. When God thus restores comfort to his mourners, *makes glad according to the days wherein he afflicted*, setting the mercies over against the crosses, we ought therein to take notice of the kindness and tenderness of the divine providence: it is as if it repented God concerning his servants, Psal. xc. 13, 15. Yet, joy that a man was born into his family, could not make him forget his grief; for he gives a melancholy name to this son, Beriah, *in trouble*; for he was born when the family was in mourning, when *it went evil with his house*. It is good to have in remembrance the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall, that our souls may be *humbled within us*, Lam. iii. 19. What name more proper for *man that is born of a woman*, than Beriah, because born into a troublesome world. It is added, as a farther honour to the house of Ephraim, (1.) That a daughter of that tribe, Sherah by name, at the time of Israel's settling in Canaan, built some cities, either at her own charge, or by her own care; one of them bore her name, Uzzen-Sherah, ver. 24. A virtuous woman may be as great an honour and blessing to a family as a mighty man. (2.) That a son of that tribe was employed in the conquest of Canaan, *Joshua the son of Nun*, ver. 27. In this also the breach made on Ephraim's family was further repaired; and perhaps the resentments of this injury formerly done by the Canaanites to the Ephraimites, might make him more vigorous in the war.

2. Of the tribe of Asher. Some men of note of that tribe are here named; their militia was not numerous, in comparison with some other tribes, only twenty six thousand men in all, but their princes were *choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes*, ver. 40. and perhaps it was their wisdom that they coveted not to make their trained bands numerous, but rather to have a few, and those apt to the war, and serviceable men.

## C H A P. VIII.

*We had some account given us of Benjamin in the foregoing chapter; here we have a larger catalogue of the great men of that tribe; (1.) Because of that tribe Saul came, the first king of Israel, to the story of whom he is hastening, chap. x. 1. (2.) Because that tribe clave to Judah, inhabited much of Jerusalem, was one of the two tribes that went into captivity, and returned back, and that story also he had an eye to, chap. ix. 1. Here is, 1. Some of the heads of that tribe named, ver. 1—32. 2. A more particular account of the family of Saul, ver. 33—40.*

1. **N**OW Benjamin begat Bela his first-born, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third, 2. Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. 3. And the sons of Bela were Addar, and Gera, and Abihud, 4. And Abishua, and Naaman, and Ahoah, 5. And Gera, and Shephuphan, and Hiram. 6. And these are the sons of Ehud: these are the heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath: 7. And Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat Uzza, and Ahihud. 8. And Shahrain begat children in the country of Moab, after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara were his wives. 9. And he begat of Hodesh his wife, Jobad, and Zibia, and Mesha, and Malcham, 10. And Jeuz, and Shachia, and Mirma. These were his sons, heads of the fathers. 11. And of Hushim he begat Abitub, and Elpaal. 12. The sons of Elpaal; Eber, and Misham, and Shamed, who built Ono, and Lod with the towns thereof: 13. Beriah also, and Shema, who were heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Aijalon; who drove away the inhabitants of Gath: 14. And Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth, 15. And Zebadiah, and Arad, and Ader, 16. And Michael, and Ispah, and Joha, the sons of Beriah; 17. And Zebediah, and Meshullam, and Hezeki, and Heber, 18. Ishmerai also, and Jeziah, and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal; 19. And Jakim, and Zichri, and Zabdi, 20. And Elienai, and Zilthai, and Eliel, 21. And Adaiah, and Beraiah, and Shimrath, the son of Shimhi; 22. And Ishpan, and Heber, and Eliel, 23. And Abdon, and Zichri, and Hanan, 24. And Haniah, and Elam, and Antothijah, 25. And Iphedeiah, and Penuel, the sons of Shashak; 26. And Shamsherai, and Shehariah, and Athaliah, 27. And Jarefiah, and

Elijah, and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham. 28. These were heads of the fathers, by their generations, chief men. These dwelt in Jerusalem. 29. And at Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon (whose wife's name was Maacah) 30. And his first-born son Abdon, and Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nadab, 31. And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zacher. 32. And Mikloth begat Shimeah. And these also dwelt with their brethren in Jerusalem over against them.

There is little or nothing of history that occurs in all these verses, we have not therefore much to observe.

1. As to the difficulties that occur in this and the foregoing genealogies, we need not perplex our selves; I presume Ezra took them as he found them *in the books of the kings of Israel and Judah*, chap. ix. 1. according as they were given in by the several tribes, each observing what method they thought fit. Hence some ascend, others descend; some have numbers affixed, others places; some have historical remarks intermixed, others have not; some are shorter, others longer; some agree with other records, others differ; some, it is likely, were torn, razed, and blotted, others more legible. Those of Dan and Reuben were intirely lost. This holy man wrote as he was moved by the holy Ghost; but there was no necessity for the making up of the defects, no, nor for the rectifying of the mistakes of these genealogies by inspiration: it was sufficient that he copied them out as they came to his hand, or so much of them as was requisite to the present purpose, which was the directing of the returned captives to settle, as near as they could, with those of their own family, and in the places of their former residence. We may suppose, many things in these genealogies which to us seem intricate, abrupt and perplexed, were plain and easy to them then, who knew how to fill up the deficiencies, and abundantly answered the intention of the publishing of them.

2. Many great and mighty nations there were now in being upon earth, and many illustrious men in them, whose names are buried in perpetual oblivion, while the names of multitudes of the Israel of God, are here carefully preserved in everlasting remembrance. They are Jasher, Jeshurun, just ones, and *the memory of the just is blessed*. Many of these, we have reason to fear, came short of everlasting honour (for even the wicked kings of Judah come into the genealogy) yet the perpetuating of their names here, was a figure of the writing of the names of all God's spiritual Israel in the Lamb's book of life.

3. This tribe of Benjamin was once brought to a very low ebb in the time of the Judges, upon the occasion of the iniquity of Gibeon, when only six hundred men escaped the sword of justice, and yet in these genealogies it makes as good a figure as almost any other of the tribes; for it is the honour of God to help the weakest, and raise up those that are most diminished and abased.

4. Here is mention of one Ehud, ver. 6. In the verse before of one Gera, ver. 5. and ver. 8. of one that descended from him that *begat children in the country of Moab*, which inclines me to think it was that Ehud, who was the second of the judges of Israel; for it is said, he was the son of Gera, and a Benjamite, Judges iii. 15. and he delivered Israel from the oppression of the Moabites, by killing the king of Moab, which might give him a greater sway in the country of Moab than we find evidence of in his history, and might occasion some of his posterity to settle there.

5. Here is mention of some of the Benjamites that *drove away the inhabitants of Gath*, ver. 13. Perhaps, those that had slain the Ephraimites, chap. vii. 21. or their posterity, by way of reprisal: and one of them that did this piece of justice was named Beriah too, that name in which the memorial of that injury was preserved.

6. Particular notice is taken of them that *dwelt in Jerusalem*, ver. 28. and again, ver. 32. that they whose ancestors had had their residence there, might thereby be induced at their return from captivity to settle there too; which, for ought appears, few were willing to do, because it was the post of danger: and therefore we find, *Neb. xi. 2. The people blessed those that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem*, most inclining to the cities of Judah rather. They whose godly parents had their conversation in the new Jerusalem, should thereby be engaged to set their faces thitherward, and pursue the way thither, whatever it cost them.

33. ¶ And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Eshbaal. 34. And the son of Jonathan was, Merib-baal; and Merib-baal begat Micah. 35. And the sons of Micah were, Pithon, and Melech, and Tarea, and Ahaz. 36. And Ahaz begat Jehoadah, and Jehoadah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza, 37. And Moza begat Binea: Rapha was his



his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son: 38. And Azel had six sons; whose names are these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel. 39. And the sons of Eshek his brother were Ulam his first-born, Jehush the second, and Eliphelet the third. 40. And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons sons an hundred and fifty. All these are of the sons of Benjamin.

It is observable, that among all the genealogies of the tribes, there is no mention of any of the kings of Israel after their defection from the house of David, much less of their families; not a word of Jeroboam's house, or Basa's, of Omri's, or Jehu's; for they were all idolaters: But the family of Saul, which was the royal family before the elevation of David, we have here a particular account of.

1. Before Saul, Kish and Ner only are named, his father, and grandfather, ver. 33. His pedigree is carried higher, 1 Sam. ix. 1. only there Kish is said to be the son of Abiel, here of Ner: he was in truth the son of Ner, but the grandson of Abiel, as appears by 1 Sam. xiv. 51. where it is said that *Ner was the son of Abiel*, and that Abner, who was the son of Ner, was Saul's uncle, i. e. his father's brother, therefore his father was also the son of Ner. It is common in all languages to put sons for grandsons, and other descendants, much more in the scanty language of the Hebrews.

2. After Saul, divers of his sons are named, but the posterity of none of them, save Jonathan only, who was blessed with a numerous issue, and those honoured with a place in the sacred genealogies, for the sake of his sincere kindness to David. The line of Jonathan is drawn down here for about ten generations; perhaps David was in a particular manner careful to preserve that, and assigned it a page by it self, because of the covenant made between his seed and Jonathan's seed for ever, 1 Sam. xx. 15, 23, 42. This genealogy ends in Ulam, whose family became famous in the tribe of Benjamin, for the number of its valiant men. Of that one man's posterity there were, as it should seem, at one time one hundred and fifty archers brought into the field of battle, that were *mighty men of valour*, ver. 40. That is taken notice of concerning them, which is more a man's praise than his pomp or wealth is, That they were qualified to serve their country.

## C H A P. IX.

*This chapter intimates to us, that one end of recording all these genealogies, was to direct the Jews, now they were returned out of captivity, with whom to incorporate, and where to reside; for here we have an account of those who first took possession of Jerusalem after their return from Babylon, and began the rebuilding of it upon the old foundation. (1.) The Israelites, ver. 2—9. (2.) The priests, ver. 10—13. (3.) The Levites, and other Nethinim. (4.) Here is the particular charge of some of the priests and Levites, ver. 27—34. (5.) A repetition of the genealogy of king Saul, ver. 35—44.*

1. **S**O all Israel were reckoned by genealogies, and behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression. 2. ¶ Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims. 3. And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh: 4. Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the children of Pharez the son of Judah. 5. And of the Shilonites; Afsiah the first-born, and his sons. 6. And of the sons of Zera; Jeuel, and their brethren, six hundred and ninety. 7. And of the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hafe-nuah, 8. And Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri, and Meshullam the son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah, 9. And their brethren, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty and six. All these men were chief of the fathers in the house of their fathers. 10. ¶ And of the priests; Jedaiah, and Jehoiarib, and Jachin, 11. And Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God. 12. And Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maasiah the son of Adiel, the son of

Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshille-mith, the son of Immer, 13. And their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

The first verse looks back upon the foregoing genealogies, and tells us, they were gathered out of *the books of the kings of Israel and Judah*; not that which we have that is so called in the canon of scripture, but another civil record, which was authentick, as the kings books with us. Mentioning Israel and Judah, he takes notice of their being *carried away to Babylon for their transgression*. Let that judgment never be forgotten, but ever be remembered for warning to posterity, to take heed of those sins that brought it upon them. Whenever we speak of any calamity that befall us, it is good to add this, It was for my transgression, that God may be justified, and clear when he judgeth.

Then follows an account of the first inhabitants after their return from captivity, that dwelt in their cities, especially in Jerusalem.

1. The Israelites. That general name is used, ver. 2. because with those of Judah and Benjamin there were many of Ephraim and Manasseh, and other of the ten tribes, ver. 3. such as had escaped to Judah, when the body of the ten tribes were carried captive, or returned to Judah upon the revolutions in Assyria, and so went into captivity with them, or met them when they were in Babylon, associated with them, and so shared in the benefit of their enlargement. It was foretold, that the *children of Judah and of Israel should be gathered together, and come up out of the land*, Hof. i. 11. and that they should be one nation again, Ezek. xxxvii. 22. Trouble drives those together that have been at variance; and the pieces of mettle that had been separated, when melted in the same crucible will run together again. Many both of Judah and Israel staid behind in captivity, but some of both, whose spirits God stirred up, inquired the way to Sion again. Divers are here named, and many more numbered that were *chief of the fathers*, ver. 9. who ought to be remembered with honour, as Israelites indeed.

2. The priests, ver. 10. It was their praise that they came with the first. Who should lead in a good work, if the priests, the Lord's ministers do not? It was the peoples praise that they would not come without them, for who but they could keep knowledge? who but they should bless them in the name of the Lord?

(1.) It is said of one of them, that he was *the ruler of the house of God*, ver. 11. not the chief ruler, for Joshua was then the high priest, but the Sagan, the next under him, his deputy, and who, perhaps, applied himself more to the business than the high priest himself. In the house of God it is requisite there be rulers, not to make new laws, but to take care that the laws of God be duly observed, by priests as well as people.

(2.) It is said of many of them, that they were *very able men for the service of the house of God*, ver. 13. In the house of God there is service to be done, constant service; and it is well for the church when those are employed in that service who are able for it; *able ministers of the new testament*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. The service of the temple was such as required at all times, especially in this critical juncture, when they were newly come out of Babylon, great courage and vigour of mind, as well as strength of body, and therefore they are praised as *mighty men of valour*.

14. And of the Levites; Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the son of Merari, 15. And Bakbakkar, Heresh, and Galal, and Mattaniah the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph, 16. And Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, that dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites. 17. And the porters were Shallum, and Akkub, and Tamon, and Ahiman, and their brethren: Shallum was the chief. 18. (Who hitherto waited in the kings gate eastward) They were porters in the companies of the children of Levi. 19. And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Corah, and his brethren: (of the house of his father) the Korathites were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers being over the host of the LORD, were keepers of the entry. 20. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them in time past, and the LORD was with him. 21. And Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah, was porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22. All these which were chosen to be porters of the gates, were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned



though his house was not so with God as he hoped, but a house of mourning, a shattered family, yet that promise was sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

(3.) The repair of this breach, in some measure, by the addition of another son to his family in his old age, ver. 23. like Seth, *another seed instead of that of Abel whom Cain slew*, Gen. iv. 25. When God thus restores comfort to his mourners, *makes glad according to the days wherein he afflicted*, setting the mercies over against the crosses, we ought therein to take notice of the kindness and tenderness of the divine providence: it is as if *it repented God concerning his servants*, Psal. xc. 13, 15. Yet, joy that a man was born into his family, could not make him forget his grief; for he gives a melancholy name to this son, Beriah, *in trouble*; for he was born when the family was in mourning, when *it went evil with his house*. It is good to have in remembrance the affliction and the misery, the worm-wood and the gall, that our souls may be *humbled within us*, Lam. iii. 19. What name more proper for *man that is born of a woman*, than Beriah, because born into a troublesome world. It is added, as a farther honour to the house of Ephraim, (1.) That a daughter of that tribe, Sherah by name, at the time of Israel's settling in Canaan, built some cities, either at her own charge, or by her own care; one of them bore her name, Uzzen-Sherah, ver. 24. A virtuous woman may be as great an honour and blessing to a family as a mighty man. (2.) That a son of that tribe was employed in the conquest of Canaan, *Joshua the son of Nun*, ver. 27. In this also the breach made on Ephraim's family was further repaired; and perhaps the resentments of this injury formerly done by the Canaanites to the Ephraimites, might make him more vigorous in the war.

2. Of the tribe of Asher. Some men of note of that tribe are here named; their militia was not numerous, in comparison with some other tribes, only twenty six thousand men in all, but their princes were *choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes*, ver. 40. and perhaps it was their wisdom that they coveted not to make their trained bands numerous, but rather to have a few, and those apt to the war, and serviceable men.

## C H A P. VIII.

*We had some account given us of Benjamin in the foregoing chapter; here we have a larger catalogue of the great men of that tribe; (1.) Because of that tribe Saul came, the first king of Israel, to the story of whom he is hastening, chap. x. 1. (2.) Because that tribe clave to Judah, inhabited much of Jerusalem, was one of the two tribes that went into captivity, and returned back, and that story also he had an eye to, chap. ix. 1. Here is, 1. Some of the heads of that tribe named, ver. 1—32. 2. A more particular account of the family of Saul, ver. 33—40.*

1. **N**OW Benjamin begat Bela his first-born, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third, 2. Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. 3. And the sons of Bela were Addar, and Gera, and Abihud, 4. And Abishua, and Naaman, and Ahoah, 5. And Gera, and Shephuphan, and Hiram. 6. And these are the sons of Ehud: these are the heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath: 7. And Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat Uzza, and Ahihud. 8. And Shahrain begat children in the country of Moab, after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara were his wives. 9. And he begat of Hodesh his wife, Jobad, and Zibia, and Mesha, and Malcham, 10. And Jeuz, and Shachia, and Mirma. These were his sons, heads of the fathers. 11. And of Hushim he begat Abitub, and Elpaal. 12. The sons of Elpaal; Eber, and Misham, and Shamed, who built Ono, and Lod with the towns thereof: 13. Beriah also, and Shema, who were heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Aijalon; who drove away the inhabitants of Gath: 14. And Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth, 15. And Zebadiah, and Arad, and Ader, 16. And Michael, and Ispah, and Joha, the sons of Beriah; 17. And Zebadiah, and Meshullam, and Hezeki, and Heber, 18. Ishmerai also, and Jezliah, and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal; 19. And Jakim, and Zichri, and Zabdi, 20. And Elienai, and Zilthai, and Eliel, 21. And Adaiah, and Beraiah, and Shimrath, the son of Shimhi; 22. And Ishpan, and Heber, and Eliel, 23. And Abdon, and Zichri, and Hanan, 24. And Haniah, and Elam, and Antothijah, 25. And Iphedeiah, and Penuel, the sons of Shashak; 26. And Shamsherai, and Shehariah, and Athaliah, 27. And Jareiah, and

Elijah, and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham. 28. These were heads of the fathers, by their generations, chief men. These dwelt in Jerusalem. 29. And at Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon (whose wives name was Maacah) 30. And his first-born son Abdon, and Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nadab, 31. And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zacher. 32. And Mikloth begat Shimeah. And these also dwelt with their brethren in Jerusalem over against them.

There is little or nothing of history that occurs in all these verses, we have not therefore much to observe.

1. As to the difficulties that occur in this and the foregoing genealogies, we need not perplex our selves; I presume Ezra took them as he found them *in the books of the kings of Israel and Judah*, chap. ix. 1. according as they were given in by the several tribes, each observing what method they thought fit. Hence some ascend, others descend; some have numbers affixed, others places; some have historical remarks intermixed, others have not; some are shorter, others longer; some agree with other records, others differ; some, it is likely, were torn, razed, and blotted, others more legible. Those of Dan and Reuben were intirely lost. This holy man wrote as he was moved by the holy Ghost; but there was no necessity for the making up of the defects, no, nor for the rectifying of the mistakes of these genealogies by inspiration: it was sufficient that he copied them out as they came to his hand, or so much of them as was requisite to the present purpose, which was the directing of the returned captives to settle, as near as they could, with those of their own family, and in the places of their former residence. We may suppose, many things in these genealogies which to us seem intricate, abrupt and perplexed, were plain and easy to them then, who knew how to fill up the deficiencies, and abundantly answered the intention of the publishing of them.

2. Many great and mighty nations there were now in being upon earth, and many illustrious men in them, whose names are buried in perpetual oblivion, while the names of multitudes of the Israel of God, are here carefully preserved in everlasting remembrance. They are Jasher, Jeshurun, just ones, and *the memory of the just is blessed*. Many of these, we have reason to fear, came short of everlasting honour (for even the wicked kings of Judah come into the genealogy) yet the perpetuating of their names here, was a figure of the writing of the names of all God's spiritual Israel in the Lamb's book of life.

3. This tribe of Benjamin was once brought to a very low ebb in the time of the Judges, upon the occasion of the iniquity of Gibeon, when only six hundred men escaped the sword of justice, and yet in these genealogies it makes as good a figure as almost any other of the tribes; for it is the honour of God to help the weakest, and raise up those that are most diminished and abased.

4. Here is mention of one Ehud, ver. 6. In the verse before of one Gera, ver. 5. and ver. 8. of one that descended from him that *begat children in the country of Moab*, which inclines me to think it was that Ehud, who was the second of the judges of Israel; for it is said, he was the son of Gera, and a Benjamite, Judges iii. 15. and he delivered Israel from the oppression of the Moabites, by killing the king of Moab, which might give him a greater sway in the country of Moab than we find evidence of in his history, and might occasion some of his posterity to settle there.

5. Here is mention of some of the Benjamites that *drove away the inhabitants of Gath*, ver. 13. Perhaps, those that had slain the Ephraimites, chap. vii. 21. or their posterity, by way of reprisal: and one of them that did this piece of justice was named Beriah too, that name in which the memorial of that injury was preserved.

6. Particular notice is taken of them that *dwelt in Jerusalem*, ver. 28. and again, ver. 32. that they whose ancestors had had their residence there, might thereby be induced at their return from captivity to settle there too; which, for ought appears, few were willing to do, because it was the post of danger: and therefore we find, Neh. xi. 2. *The people blessed those that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem*, most inclining to the cities of Judah rather. They whose godly parents had their conversation in the new Jerusalem, should thereby be engaged to set their faces thitherward, and pursue the way thither, whatever it cost them.

33. ¶ And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Eshbaal. 34. And the son of Jonathan was, Merib-baal; and Merib-baal begat Micah. 35. And the sons of Micah were, Pithon, and Melech, and Tarea, and Ahaz. 36. And Ahaz begat Jehoadah, and Jehoadah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza, 37. And Moza begat Binea: Rapha was his



his son, Eleafah his son, Azel his son: 38. And Azel had six sons; whose names are these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel. 39. And the sons of Eshek his brother were Ulam his first-born, Jehush the second, and Eliphelet the third. 40. And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons sons an hundred and fifty. All these are of the sons of Benjamin.

It is observable, that among all the genealogies of the tribes, there is no mention of any of the kings of Israel after their defection from the house of David, much less of their families; not a word of Jeroboam's house, or Basia's, of Omri's, or Jehu's; for they were all idolaters: But the family of Saul, which was the royal family before the elevation of David, we have here a particular account of.

1. Before Saul, Kish and Ner only are named, his father, and grandfather, ver. 33. His pedigree is carried higher, 1 Sam. ix. 1. only there Kish is said to be the son of Abiel, here of Ner: he was in truth the son of Ner, but the grandson of Abiel, as appears by 1 Sam. xiv. 51. where it is said that *Ner was the son of Abiel*, and that Abner, who was the son of Ner, was Saul's uncle, i. e. his father's brother, therefore his father was also the son of Ner. It is common in all languages to put sons for grandsons, and other descendants, much more in the scanty language of the Hebrews.

2. After Saul, divers of his sons are named, but the posterity of none of them, save Jonathan only, who was blessed with a numerous issue, and those honoured with a place in the sacred genealogies, for the sake of his sincere kindness to David. The line of Jonathan is drawn down here for about ten generations; perhaps David was in a particular manner careful to preserve that, and assigned it a page by itself, because of the covenant made between his seed and Jonathan's seed for ever, 1 Sam. xx. 15, 23, 42. This genealogy ends in Ulam, whose family became famous in the tribe of Benjamin, for the number of its valiant men. Of that one man's posterity there were, as it should seem, at one time one hundred and fifty archers brought into the field of battle, that were *mighty men of valour*, ver. 40. That is taken notice of concerning them, which is more a man's praise than his pomp or wealth is, That they were qualified to serve their country.

## C H A P. IX.

*This chapter intimates to us, that one end of recording all these genealogies, was to direct the Jews, now they were returned out of captivity, with whom to incorporate, and where to reside; for here we have an account of those who first took possession of Jerusalem after their return from Babylon, and began the rebuilding of it upon the old foundation. (1.) The Israelites, ver. 2—9. (2.) The priests, ver. 10—13. (3.) The Levites, and other Nethinim. (4.) Here is the particular charge of some of the priests and Levites, ver. 27—34. (5.) A repetition of the genealogy of king Saul, ver. 35—44.*

1. **S**O all Israel were reckoned by genealogies, and behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression. 2. ¶ Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims. 3. And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh: 4. Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the children of Pharez the son of Judah. 5. And of the Shilonites; Afaiah the first-born, and his sons. 6. And of the sons of Zera; Jeuel, and their brethren, six hundred and ninety. 7. And of the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hafe-nuah, 8. And Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri, and Meshullam the son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah, 9. And their brethren, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty and six. All these men were chief of the fathers in the house of their fathers. 10. ¶ And of the priests; Jedaiah, and Jehoiarib, and Jachin, 11. And Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God. 12. And Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maafai the son of Adiel, the son of

Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshille-mith, the son of Immer, 13. And their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

The first verse looks back upon the foregoing genealogies, and tells us, they were gathered out of *the books of the kings of Israel and Judah*; not that which we have that is so called in the canon of scripture, but another civil record, which was authentick, as the kings books with us. Mentioning Israel and Judah, he takes notice of their being *carried away to Babylon for their transgression*. Let that judgment never be forgotten, but ever be remembered for warning to posterity, to take heed of those sins that brought it upon them. Whenever we speak of any calamity that befel us, it is good to add this, It was for my transgression, that God may be justified, and clear when he judgeth.

Then follows an account of the first inhabitants after their return from captivity, that dwelt in their cities, especially in Jerusalem.

1. The Israelites. That general name is used, ver. 2. because with those of Judah and Benjamin there were many of Ephraim and Manasseh, and other of the ten tribes, ver. 3. such as had escaped to Judah, when the body of the ten tribes were carried captive, or returned to Judah upon the revolutions in Assyria, and so went into captivity with them, or met them when they were in Babylon, associated with them, and so shared in the benefit of their enlargement. It was foretold, that the *children of Judah and of Israel should be gathered together, and come up out of the land*, Hof. i. 11. and that they should be one nation again, Ezek. xxxvii. 22. Trouble drives those together that have been at variance; and the pieces of mettle that had been separated, when melted in the same crucible will run together again. Many both of Judah and Israel staid behind in captivity, but some of both, whose spirits God stirred up, inquired the way to Sion again. Divers are here named, and many more numbred that were *chief of the fathers*, ver. 9. who ought to be remembered with honour, as Israelites indeed.

2. The priests, ver. 10. It was their praise that they came with the first. Who should lead in a good work, if the priests, the Lord's ministers do not? It was the peoples praise that they would not come without them, for who but they could keep knowledge? who but they should bless them in the name of the Lord?

(1.) It is said of one of them, that he was *the ruler of the house of God*, ver. 11. not the chief ruler, for Joshua was then the high priest, but the Sagan, the next under him, his deputy, and who, perhaps, applied himself more to the business than the high priest himself. In the house of God it is requisite there be rulers, not to make new laws, but to take care that the laws of God be duly observed, by priests as well as people.

(2.) It is said of many of them, that they were *very able men for the service of the house of God*, ver. 13. In the house of God there is service to be done, constant service; and it is well for the church when those are employed in that service who are able for it; *able ministers of the new testament*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. The service of the temple was such as required at all times, especially in this critical juncture, when they were newly come out of Babylon, great courage and vigour of mind, as well as strength of body, and therefore they are praised as *mighty men of valour*.

14. And of the Levites; Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the son of Merari, 15. And Bakbakkar, Heresh, and Galal, and Mattaniah the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph, 16. And Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah the son of Afa, the son of Elkanah, that dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites. 17. And the porters were Shallum, and Akkub, and Tamon, and Ahiman, and their brethren: Shallum was the chief. 18. (Who hitherto waited in the kings gate eastward) They were porters in the companies of the children of Levi. 19. And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Corah, and his brethren: (of the house of his father) the Korathites were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers being over the host of the LORD, were keepers of the entry. 20. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them in time past, and the LORD was with him. 21. And Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah, was porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22. All these which were chosen to be porters of the gates, were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned



reckoned by their genealogy in their villages: whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. 23. So they and their children *had* the oversight of the gates of the house of the LORD, *namely* the house of the tabernacle, by wards. 24. In four quarters were the porters, towards the east, west, north, and south. 25. And their brethren, *which were* in their villages, *were* to come after seven days from time to time with them. 26. For these Levites, the four chief porters were in *their* set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. 27. ¶ And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge *was* upon them, and the opening thereof every morning *pertained* to them. 28. And *certain* of them had the charge of the ministring vessels, that they should bring them in and out by tale. 29. *Some* of them also *were* appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oyl, and the frankincense, and the spices. 30. And *some* of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices. 31. And Mattithiah, *one* of the Levites (who *was* the first-born of Shallum the Korahite) had the set office over the things that were made in the pans. 32. And *other* of their brethren of the sons of the Kohathites, *were* over the shew-bread to prepare it every sabbath. 33. And these *are* the fingers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, *who remain* in the chambers, *were* free: for they were employed in *that* work day and night. 34. These chief fathers of the Levites *were* chief throughout their generations; these dwelt at Jerusalem.

We have here a farther account of the good posture which the affairs of religion were put into immediately upon their return out of Babylon. They had smarted for their former neglect of ordinances, and smarted under the late want of ordinances; and both these considerations made them very zealous and forward in setting up the worship of God among them; and so they began their work at the right end. Instances hereof we have here.

1. Before the house of the Lord was built, they had the house of the tabernacle, a mean and moveable tent, which they made use of in the mean time. They that cannot yet reach to have a temple, must not be without a tabernacle; but be thankful for that, and make the best of it. Never let God's work be left undone for want of a place to do it in.

2. In allotting to the priests and Levites their respective employments, they had an eye to the model that was drawn up by David and Samuel the seer, *ver.* 22. Samuel in his time had drawn the scheme of it, and laid the foundation, though the ark was then in obscurity, and David afterwards finished it; and both by immediate direction from God. Or, David as soon he was anointed had this matter in his head, and consulted Samuel about it, though he was then in his troubles, and the plan was formed in concert between them two. This, perhaps, had been little regarded for many ages; but now after a long interruption it is revived. In dividing the work, they observed these ancient land-marks.

3. The most of them dwelt at Jerusalem, *ver.* 34. yet there were some that dwelt in the villages, *ver.* 16, 22. because it may be there was not as yet room for them in Jerusalem; but however they were employed in the service of the tabernacle, *ver.* 25. *they were to come after seven days from time to time.* They had their weeks of attendance in their turns.

4. Many of the Levites were employed as porters at the gates of the house of God; four chief porters, *ver.* 26. and under them to the number of two hundred and twelve, *ver.* 22. They had the oversight of the gates, *ver.* 23. were keepers of the threshold, as it is in the margin, *ver.* 19. and keepers of the entry. This seemed a mean office, and yet David would rather have it than *dwell in the tents of wickedness*, *Psal.* lxxxiv. 10. Their office was, (1.) To open the doors of God's house every morning, *ver.* 27. and shut them at night. (2.) To keep off the unclean, and hinder those from thrusting in that were forbidden by the law. (3.) To direct and introduce into the courts of the Lord, those that came thither to worship, to shew them whether to go and what to do, that they might not run themselves into a premunire. This required care, and diligence, and constant attendance. Ministers have work to do of this kind.

5. Here is one Phinehas, a son of Eleazer, that is said to be a ruler over them in time past, *ver.* 26. not the famous high priest of that name, but (as is supposed) an eminent Levite, of whom it is here said, that *the Lord was with him*; Or, as the Chaldee reads it, *the word of the Lord was his helper*; the eternal Word, who is *Jehovah the mighty one, on whom help is laid.*

6. It is said of some of them, that because the charge was upon them *they lodged round about the house of God*, *ver.* 27. It is good for ministers to be near their work, that they may give themselves wholly to it. The Levites pitched about the tabernacle when they marched through the wilderness. Then they were porters in one sense, bearing the burthens of the sanctuary, now porters in another sense, attending the gates and the doors, herein both keeping the charge of the sanctuary.

7. Every one knew his charge. Some were intrusted with the plate, the ministring vessels, to bring them in and out by tale, *ver.* 28. Others were appointed to prepare the fine flour, wine, oyl, &c. *ver.* 29. Others that were priests made up the holy anointing oyl, *ver.* 30. Others took care of the meat-offerings, *ver.* 31. Others of the shew-bread, *ver.* 32. As in other great houses, so in God's house, the work is likely to be done well, when every one knows the duty of his place, and makes a business of it. God is the God of order: but that which is every body's work will be no body's work.

8. The fingers were employed *in that work day and night*, *ver.* 33. They were the *chief fathers of the Levites* that made a business of it, not mean singing-men, that made a trade of it. They remained in the chambers of the temple, that they might closely and constantly attend it; and were therefore discharged from all other services. It should seem, some companies or other were continually singing, at least at stated hours, both day and night. Thus was God continually praised, as it is fit he should be, who is continually doing good: thus devout people might at any hour have assistance in their devotion. Thus was that temple a figure of the heavenly one, where they *rest not day nor night from praising God*, *Rev.* iv. 8. *Blessed are they that dwell in thine house, they will be still praising thee.*

35. ¶ And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jehiel, whose wives name *was* Maachah: 36. And his first-born son Abdon, then Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Ner, and Nadab, 37. And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zechariah, and Mikloth. 38. And Mikloth begat Shimeam: and they also dwelt with their brethren at Jerusalem, over against their brethren. 39. And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal. 40. And the son of Jonathan *was* Merib-baal: and Merib-baal begat Micah. 41. And the sons of Micah *were* Pithon, and Melech, Tahrea, and Abaz. 42. And Ahaz begat Jarah, and Jarah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza, 43. And Moza begat Binea; and Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. 44. And Azel had six sons, whose names *are* these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. These *were* the sons of Azel.

These verses are the very same with *chap.* viii. 29—38. giving an account of the ancestors of Saul, and the posterity of Jonathan: there it is the conclusion of the genealogy of Benjamin; here it is an introduction to the story of Saul. We take the repetition as we find it: but if we admit that there are in the originals, especially in these books, some errors of the transcribers, I should be tempted to think this repetition arose from a blunder. Some one in copying out these genealogies having written those words, *ver.* 34. *These dwell in Jerusalem*, cast his eye on the same words, *chap.* viii. 28. *These dwell in Jerusalem*, and so went on with what followed there, instead of going on with what followed here; and when he perceived his mistake, was loth to make a blot in his book, and so let it stand. We have a rule in our law, *redundans non nocet*; what is only superfluous is not noxious.

## CHAP. X.

The design of Ezra in these books of the Chronicles, was to preserve the records of the house of David, which though much sunk and lessened in a common eye by the captivity; yet grew more and more illustrious in the eyes of those that lived by faith, by the nearer approach of the son of David. And therefore he repeats not the history of Saul's reign, but only of his death, by which way was made for David to the throne. In this chapter we have, (1.) The fatal rout which the Philistines gave to Saul's army, and the fatal stroke he gave himself, *ver.* 1—7. (2.) The Philistines triumph therein, *ver.* 8—10. (3.) The respect which the men of Jabesh-gilead shewed to the royal corps, *ver.* 11, 12. (4.) The reason of Saul's rejection, *ver.* 13, 14.



1. **N**OW the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2. And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons, and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. 3. And the battle went fore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. 4. Then said Saul to his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not, for he was fore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5. And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and he died. 6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together. 7. And when all the men of Israel that were in the valley, saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead; then they forsook their cities, and fled: and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

This account of Saul's death, is the same with that which we had 1 Sam. xxxi. 1, &c. We need not repeat the exposition of it, only let us observe,

1. Princes sin, and the people suffer for it. It was a bad time with Israel when they fled before the Philistines, and fell down slain, ver. 1. when they quitted their cities, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them, ver. 7. We do not find that they were at this time guilty of idolatry, as they had been before in the days of the judges, and were after in the days of the kings; Samuel had reformed them, and they were reformed; and yet they are thus given to the spoil, and to the robbers: no doubt, there was enough in them to deserve it, but that which divine justice had chiefly an eye to, was the sin of Saul. Note, Princes and great men should in a special manner take heed of provoking God's wrath; for if they kindle that fire, they know not how many may be consumed by it for their sakes.

2. Parents sin, and the children suffer for it. When the measure of Saul's iniquity was full, and his day came to fall, (which David foresaw, 1 Sam. xxvi. 10.) he not only descended into battle and perished himself, but his sons (all but Ishbosheth) perished with him, and Jonathan among the rest, that gracious, generous man; for all things came alike to all. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children; and they fell as parts of the condemned father. Note, They that love their seed must leave their sins, lest they perish not alone in their iniquity, but bring ruin on their families with themselves, or entail a curse upon them when they are gone.

3. Sinners sin, and at length suffer for it themselves, though they be long reprieved; for though sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed; it was so upon Saul, and the manner of his fall was such, as in divers particulars answered his sin. (1.) He had thrown a javelin more than once at David, and missed him; but the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. (2.) He had commanded Doeg to slay the priests of the Lord, and now in despair he commands his armour-bearer to draw his sword, and thrust him through. (3.) He that had disobeyed the command of God, in not destroying the Amalekites, his armour-bearer disobeys his command in not destroying him. (4.) He that was the murderer of the priests, is justly left to himself to be his own murderer; and his family is cut off, who cut off the city of the priests. See, and say, *The Lord is righteous.*

8. ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9. And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto the idols, and to the people. 10. And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. 11. ¶ And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul; 12. They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days. 13. ¶ So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; 14. And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

Here, 1. From the triumph of the Philistines over the body of Saul, we may learn, (1.) That the greater dignity men are

advanced to, the greater disgrace they are in danger of falling into. Saul's dead body, because he was a king, was abused more than any other of the slain. Advancement makes men a mark for malice. (2.) That if we give not to God the glory of our successes, even the Philistines will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us; for when they had obtained a victory over Saul, they sent tidings to their idols; poor idols, that knew not what was done a few miles off, till the tidings were brought them; nor then neither. They also put Saul's armour in the house of their gods, ver. 10. Shall Dagon have so great a room in their triumphs, and the true and living God be forgotten in ours?

2. From the triumph of the men of Jabesh-gilead in the rescue of the bodies of Saul and his sons, we learn, That there is a respect owing to the remains of the deceased; especially of deceased princes. We are not to inquire concerning the eternal state; that must be left to God; but we must treat the dead body, as those who remember it has been united to an immortal soul, and must be so again.

3. From the triumphs of divine justice in the ruin of Saul, we may learn, (1.) That the sin of sinners will certainly find them out sooner or later. Saul died for his transgression. (2.) That no man's greatness can exempt him from the judgments of God. (3.) Disobedience is a killing thing. Saul died for not keeping the word of the Lord, by which he was ordered to destroy the Amalekites. (4.) Consulting with witches is a sin that fills the measure of iniquity as soon as any thing. Saul inquired of one that had a familiar spirit, and inquired not of the Lord, therefore he slew him, ver. 13, 14. Saul slew himself, and yet it is said, God slew him; what is done by wicked hands, yet is done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. They that abandon themselves to the devil, shall be abandoned to him; so shall their doom be. It is said, 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. Saul did inquire of the Lord, and he answered him not; but here it is said, Saul did not enquire of God, for he did not till he was brought to the last extremity, and then it was too late.

## CHAP. XI.

In this chapter is repeated, (1.) The elevation of David to the throne, immediately upon the death of Saul, by common consent, ver. 1—3. (2.) His gaining the castle of Zion out of the hands of the Jebusites, ver. 4—9. (3.) The catalogue of his worthies, and the great men of his kingdom, ver. 10—47.

1. **T**HEN all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2. And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out, and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel. 3. Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron, and David made a covenant with them in Hebron, before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD, by Samuel. 4. ¶ And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem which is Jebus, where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. 5. And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless, David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David. 6. And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first, shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went up, and was chief. 7. And David dwelt in the castle, therefore they called it, The city of David. 8. And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city. 9. So David waxed greater and greater: for the LORD of hosts was with him.

David is here brought to the possession,

1. Of the throne of Israel, after he had reigned seven years in Hebron over Judah only. In consideration of his relation to them, ver. 1. his former good services, and especially the divine designation, ver. 2. they anointed him their king, he covenanted to protect them, and they to bear faith and true allegiance to him, ver. 3. Observe, (1.) God's counsels will be fulfilled at last, whatever difficulties lie in the way. If God have said, David shall rule, it is in vain to oppose it. (2.) Men that have long stood in their own light, when they have wearied themselves with their lying vanities, it is to be hoped, will understand the things that belong to their peace, and return to their own mercies. (3.) Between prince and people there is an original contract, which both ought religiously to observe. If ever any prince might have claimed an absolute despotick power, David might, and might as safely as any be intrusted with it, and yet



he made a covenant with the people, took the coronation oath to rule by law.

2. Of the strong-hold of Zion, which was held by the Jebusites till David's time. Whether David had a particular eye upon it as a place fit to make a royal city, or that he had a promise of it from God, it seems it was one of his first exploits to make himself master of that fort; and when he had it, he called it the *city of David*, ver. 7. To this reference is had, *Psal.* ii. 6. *I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.* See here what quickens and engageth resolution in great undertakings. (1.) Opposition. When the Jebusites set David at defiance, and said, *Thou shalt not come hither*, he resolved to force it, whatever it cost him. (2.) Prospect of preferment; when David proposed to give the general's place to him that would lead the attack upon the castle of Zion, Joab was fired with the proposal, and he *went first up, and was chief*. It has been said, Take away honour out of the soldier's eye, and you cut off the spurs from his heels.

10. ¶ These also are the chief of the mighty men which David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD, concerning Israel. 11. And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jashobeam an Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lift up his spear against three hundred, slain by him at one time. 12. And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighties. 13. He was with David at Pas-dammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley, and the people fled from before the Philistines. 14. And they set themselves in the midst of that parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a great deliverance. 15. ¶ Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam, and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim. 16. And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines garrison was then at Bethlehem. 17. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that is at the gate! 18. And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD. 19. And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it: therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest. 20. ¶ And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew them, and had name among the three. 21. Of the three, he was more honourable than the two, for he was their captain; howbeit, he attained not unto the first three. 22. Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lion-like men of Moab; also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day. 23. And he slew an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high, and in the Egyptians hand was a spear like a weavers beam, and he went down to him with a staff and pluckt the spear out of the Egyptians hand, slew him with his own spear. 24. These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among the three mightiest. 25. Behold, he was honourable among the thirty, but attained not to the first three: and David set him over his guard. 26. ¶ Also the valiant men of the armies were Afahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo, of Beth-lehem, 27. Shammoth the Hararite, Helez the Pelonite, 28. Ira the son of Ikesh the Tekoite, Abiezer the Antothite, 29. Sibbecai, the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, 30. Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the Netophathite, 31. Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah, that pertained to the children of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite, 32. Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, 33. Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite, 34. The sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shage the Hararite, 35. Ahi-

am the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphaz the son of Ur, 36. Hopher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, 37. Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezbai, 38. Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri, 39. Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite, the armour-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah, 40. Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 41. Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai, 42. Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites, and thirty with him, 43. Hanan the son of Maachah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, 44. Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite, 45. Jediael the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite, 46. Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, 47. Eliel, and Obed, and Jasiel the Mefobaite.

We have here an account of David's worthies, the great men of his time that served him, and were preferred by him. The first edition of this catalogue we had, 2 Sam. xxiii. 8, &c. This is much the same, only that these named here from ver. 41. to the end, are added. Observe,

1. The connexion of this catalogue with that which is said concerning David, ver. 9. (1.) *David waxed greater and greater*, and these were his mighty men. Much of the strength and honour of great men is borrowed from their servants, and depends upon them, which cannot but somewhat diminish pomp and power, in the opinion of those that are wise. David is great, because he has great men about him; take these away, and he is where he was. (2.) *The Lord of hosts was with him, and these were the mighty men which he had*. God was with him, and wrought for him, but by men and means, and the use of second causes. By this it appeared God was with him, that he inclined the hearts of those to come over to him, that were able to serve his interests. As if God be for us, none can be against us; so if God be for us, all shall be for us that we have occasion for. Yet David ascribed his success and increase not to the hosts he had, but to the *Lord of hosts*; not to the mighty men that were with him, but to the mighty God, whose presence with us is all in all.

2. The title of this catalogue, ver. 10. *These are the men who strengthened themselves with him*: In strengthening him, they strengthened themselves, and their own interest; for his advancement was theirs. What we do in our places for the support of the kingdom of the Son of David, we shall be gainers by: In strengthening it, we strengthen our selves. It may be read, *They held strongly with him, and with all Israel*. Note, When God has work to do, he will not want fitting instruments to do it with. If it be work that requires mighty men, mighty men shall be either found or made to effect it, according to the word of the Lord.

3. That which made all these men honourable, was the good services that they did to their king and country; they helped to make David king, ver. 10. A good piece of work! They slew the Philistines and other publick enemies, and were instrumental to save Israel. Note, The way to be great, is to do good. Nor did they gain this honour without labour, and the hazard of their lives. The honours of Christ's kingdom are prepared for those that *fight the good fight of faith*, that labour and suffer, and are willing to venture all, even life itself for Christ and a good conscience. It is by a patient continuance in well-doing, that we must seek for glory, and honour, and immortality. And they that are faithful to the son of David, shall find their names registred and inrolled much more to their honour, than these here are in the records of fame.

Among all the great exploits of David's mighty men, here thing great mentioned concerning David himself, but his *dig out water before the Lord*, which he had longed for, ver. 18, 19. And there were four very honourable dispositions of David appeared in that action, which, for ought I know, make it as great as any of the achievements of those worthies. (1.) Repenting of his own weakness. It is really an honour to a man, when he is made sensible, that he has said or done any thing unadvisedly, to unsay it, and undo it again by repentance; as it is a shame to a man, when he has said or done amiss, to stand to it. (2.) Denial of his own appetite: He longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem, but when he had it he would not drink it, because he would not so far humour himself, and gratify a foolish fancy. He that has such a rule as this over his own spirit, is better than the mighty. It is an honour to a man to have the command of himself; but he that will command himself, must sometimes cross himself. (3.) Devotion towards God: That water which he thought too good, too precious for his own drinking, he poured it out to the Lord, for a drink-offering. If we have any thing better than other, let God be honoured with it, who is the best, and should have the best. (4.) Tenderness of his servants: It put him into the greatest confusion imaginable,



imaginable, to think that three brave men should go in hazard of their lives to fetch water for him; in his account it turns the water into blood. It is the honour of great men not to be prodigal of the blood of those they employ, but in all the commands they give them to put their own souls into their souls stead.

5. In the wonderful achievements of these heroes, the power of God must be acknowledged: How could one slay three hundred, and another the same number, *ver. 11, 20.* another two lion-like men, *ver. 22.* and another an Egyptian giant, *ver. 23.* if they had not had an extraordinary presence of God with them, according to that promise, *Josh. xxiii. 10. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God fighteth for you.*

6. One of these worthies is said to be an Ammonite, *ver. 39.* another a Moabite, *ver. 46.* and yet the law was, that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the congregation of the Lord, *Deut. xxiii. 3.* These, it is likely, had approved themselves so hearty for the interest of Israel, that in their case it was thought fit to dispense with that law, and the rather, because it was an indication that the Son of David would have worthies among the Gentiles; with him there is neither Greek nor Jew.

## C H A P. XII.

*What the mighty did towards making David king, we read in the foregoing chapter: here we are told what the many did towards it. It was not all at once, but gradually that David ascended the throne. His kingdom was to last, and therefore, like fruits that keep longest, it ripened slowly. After he had long waited for the vacancy of the throne, it was at two steps, and those above seven years distant, that he ascended it: now we are told, (1.) What help came in to him to Ziklag to make him king of Judah, ver. 1—22. (2.) What help came in to him to Hebron to make him king over all Israel, above seven years after, ver. 23—40.*

1. **N**OW these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close, because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. 2. They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left, in hurling stones, and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin. 3. The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah, the Gibeathite, and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth, and Berachah, and Jehu the Antothite, 4. And Ismaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty, and Jeremiah, and Jahaziel, and Johanan, and Jozabad the Gederathite, 5. Elusai, and Jerimoth, and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah, the Haruphite. 6. Elkanah, and Jesiah, and Azareel, and Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korhites, 7. And Joelah, and Zebadiah the sons of Jeroham of Gedor. 8. And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David, into the hold to the wilderness, men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains: 9. Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, 10. Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, 11. Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, 12. Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, 13. Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the Eleventh. 14. These were of the sons of Gad, captains of the hosts: one of the least was over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand. 15. These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks, and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west. 16. And there came of the children of Benjamin, and Judah, to the hold unto David. 17. And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me, to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it. 18. Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: Peace, peace, be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band. 19. And there fell some of Manasseh to David (when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle, they helped them not, for the lords of the Philistines, upon advise-

ment sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul, to the jeopardy of our heads) 20. As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jedaiel, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that were of Manasseh. 21. And they helped David against the band of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host. 22. For at that time day by day, there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.

We have here an account of them that appeared and acted as David's friends upon the death of Saul, to bring about the revolution then. All the forces he had while he was persecuted, was but six hundred men, those served for his guards; but when the time was come that he must begin to act offensively, providence brought in more to his assistance. Even while he kept himself close because of Saul, *ver. 1.* he did not appear to invite or encourage his friends, and well-wishers, to come in to him, not foreseeing the death of Saul so near. God was inclining and preparing them to come over to him with seasonable succours: They that trust God to do his work for them in his own way and time, shall find his providence out-doing all their forecast and contrivance. The war was God's, and he found out helpers of the war, whose forwardness to act for the man God designed for the government, is here recorded to their honour.

1. Some, even of Saul's brethren, of the tribe of Benjamin, and akin to him, came over to David, *ver. 2.* What moved them to it we are not told, probably, a generous indignation at the base treatment, which Saul, one of their tribe gave him, animated them to appear the more vigorously for him, that the guilt and reproach of it might not lie upon them. These Benjamites are described to be men of great dexterity, that were trained up in shooting and slinging, and used both hands alike, ingenious, active men; a few of these, might do David a great deal of service. Several of the leading men of them are here named. See *Judg. xx. 16.*

2. Some of the tribe of Gad, though seated on the other side Jordan, had such a conviction of David's title to, and fitness for the government, that they separated themselves from their brethren (and a laudable separation it was) to go to David, though he was in the hold in the wilderness, *ver. 8.* probably, some of his strong-holds in the wilderness of Engedi; they were but few, eleven in all, here named, but they added much to David's strength. Those that had hitherto come in to his assistance, were men of broken fortunes, distressed, discontented, and soldiers of fortune, that came to him rather for protection than to do him any service, *1 Sam. xxii. 2.* But these Gadites were brave men, men of war, and fit for the battle, *ver. 8.* For, (1.) They were able bodied men, men of incredible swiftness, not to fly from, but to fly upon the enemy, and to pursue the scattered forces; in this they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains, so that no man could out-run them; and yet they had faces like the faces of lions, so that no man could out-fight them. (2.) They were disciplined men, trained up to military exercises, they could handle shield and buckler, use both offensive and defensive weapons. (3.) They were officers of the militia in their own tribe, *ver. 14.* So that though they did not bring soldiers with them, they had them at command; hundreds, thousands. (4.) They were daring men, that could break through the greatest difficulties: Upon some expedition or other, perhaps, this to David, they swam over Jordan, when it overflowed all its banks, *ver. 15.* Those are fit to be employed in the cause of God, that can venture thus in a dependence upon the divine protection. (5.) They were men that what business they engaged in, they would go through with. What enemies they were that they met with in the vallies, when they had passed Jordan, doth not appear, but they put them to flight with their lion-like faces, and pursued them with matchless fury, both toward the east, and toward the west; which way soever they turned they followed their blow, and did not do their work by the halves.

3. Some of Judah and Benjamin came to him, *ver. 16.* Their leader was Amasai, whether the same with that Amasa that afterwards sided with Absalom, (*2 Sam. xvii. 25.*) or no, doth not appear. Now here we have,

(1.) David's prudent treaty with them, *ver. 17.* He was surprized to see them, and could not but conceive some jealousy of the intentions of their coming, having been so oft in danger by the treachery of the men of Ziph, and the men of Keilah, who yet were all men of Judah; he might well be timorous, whose life was so much struck at; might well be suspicious, who had been deceived in so many, that he said in his haste, *all men are liars.* No marvel then, he meets these men of Judah with caution. Observe how he puts the matter to themselves, how fairly he deals with them: As they are, they shall find him, so shall all that deal with the Son of David. 1. If they be faithful and honourable, he will be their rewarder. *If ye be, come peaceably unto me to help me;* though ye come late, and have left me exposed



exposed a great while; though you bring no great strength with you to turn the scale for me, yet I will thankfully accept your good-will, and *my heart shall be knit unto you*, I will love you and honour you, and do you all the kindness I can. Affections, respects, and services that are cordial and sincere, will find favour with a good man; as they do with a good God, though clogged with infirmities, and the products of them turning to no great account. But, 2. If they be false, and come to betray him into the hands of Saul, under colour of friendship, he leaves them to God to be their avenger, as he is, and will be of every thing that is treacherous and perfidious. Never was man more violently run upon, and run down than David was, (except the Son of David himself) and yet he had the testimony of his conscience, that there was no wrong in his hands; he meant no ill to any man, which was his rejoicing in the day of evil, and inabled him when he feared treachery, to commit his cause to him that judgeth righteously, he will not be judge in his own cause, though a wise man; nor avenge himself, though a man of valour: but let the righteous God, who hath said, *vengeance is mine*, do both; *The God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it*. Observe in this appeal, 1. He calls God, the *God of our fathers*, both his fathers and theirs. Thus he minds them not to deal ill with him, for they both were descendants from the same patriarchs, they both were dependents on the same God: Thus he encourageth himself to believe that God would right him, if he were abused; for he was the *God of his fathers*, and therefore a blessing was entailed on him; and a God to all Israel, and therefore not only a judge to all the earth, but particularly determining controversies between contending Israelites. 2. He doth not imprecate any fearful judgment upon them, though they should deal treacherously, but very modestly refers himself to the divine wisdom and justice, the *Lord look thereon*, and judge as he sees (for he sees mens hearts) and *rebuke it*. It becomes those that appeal to God, to express themselves with great temper and moderation; for the wrath of man *works not the righteousness of God*.

(2.) Their hearty closure with him, *ver. 18*. Amasai was their spokesman, on whom the *Spirit of the Lord came*, not a spirit of prophecy, but a spirit of wisdom, and resolution, according to the occasion, putting words into his mouth, unpremeditated, which were very proper both to give David satisfaction, and to animate those that accompanied him; nothing could be said more fine, more lively, nor more pertinent to the occasion. For himself and all his associates, 1. He professeth a very cordial adherence to David and his interest, against all that opposed him, and a resolution to stand by him with the hazard of all that was dear to them. *Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse*. In calling him son of Jesse, they mind themselves, that he was lineally descended from Nahshon and Salmon, who in their days were princes of the tribe of Judah. Saul had called him so in disdain, 1 *Sam. xx. 27. — xxii. 7*. but they look upon it as his honour. They were convinced that he was on God's side, and that God was on his side, and therefore *thine are we, David, and on thy side*. It is good, if we must side, to side with those that side with God, and have God with them. 2. He wisheth prosperity to David and his cause, not drinking a health, but praying for peace to him and all his friends, and well-wishers, *Peace, peace be unto thee*, all the good thy heart desires, and *peace be to thine helpers*, among whom we desire to be reckoned, that peace may be on us. 3. He assures him of help from heaven; *for thy God helpeth thee*, therefore we wish peace may be, and therefore we doubt not but peace shall be, to thee and thy helpers. God is thy God, and those that have him for their God, no doubt, have him for their helper in every time of need and danger. From these expressions of Amasai, we may take instruction how to testify our affection and allegiance to the Lord Jesus; his we must be without reservation, or power of revocation: on his side we must be forward to appear and act; to his interest we must be hearty well-wishers: Hosanna; prosperity to his gospel and kingdom; for his God helpeth him, and will till he have put down all opposing rule, principality and power.

(3.) David's cheerful acceptance of them into his interest and friendship. Charity and honour teach us to let fall our jealousies, as soon as satisfaction is given us; *David received them*, and preferred them to be *captains of the band*.

4. Some of Manasseh likewise joined in with him, *ver. 19*. Providence gave them a fair opportunity to do it, when he and his men marched through their country upon this occasion. Achish took David with him when he went out to fight with Saul; but the lords of the Philistines obliged him to withdraw; we have the story 1 *Sam. xxix. 4, &c.* In his return, some great men of Manasseh, who had no heart to go join with Saul against the Philistines, struck in with David; and very seasonably, to help him *against the band of Amalekites*, who had plundered Ziklag: they were not many, but they were all mighty men, and did David good service upon that occasion, 1 *Sam. xxx.* See how providence provides. David's interest grew strangely, just then when he had occasion to make use of it, *ver. 22*. Auxiliary forces flocked in daily, till he had a great host. When

the promise comes to the birth, leave it to God to find strength to bring forth.

23. ¶ And these *are* the numbers of the bands *that were* ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD. 24. The children of Judah that bare shield and spear, *were* six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war. 25. Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred. 26. Of the children of Levi, four thousand and six hundred. 27. And Jehoiada *was* the leader of the Aaronites; and with him *were* three thousand and seven hundred. 28. And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his fathers house twenty and two captains. 29. And of the children of Benjamin the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul. 30. And of the children of Ephraim, twenty thousand and eight hundred mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers. 31. And of the half-tribe of Manasseh, eighteen thousand which were expressed by name, to come and make David king. 32. And of the children of Issachar, *which were men* that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do: the heads of them *were* two hundred, and all their brethren *were* at their commandment. 33. Of Zebulun such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: *they were* not of double heart. 34. And of Naphtali a thousand captains with them, with shield and spear, thirty and seven thousand. 35. And of the Danites expert in war, twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. 36. And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. 37. And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half-tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand. 38. All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel *were* of one heart to make David king. 39. And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them. 40. Moreover, they that were nigh them, *even* to Issachar, and Zebulun, and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oyl, and oxen, and sheep abundantly for *there was* joy in Israel.

We have here an account of those who were active in perfecting the settlement of David upon the throne, after the death of Ishboseth. We read, *chap. xi. 1.* and before, 2 *Sam. v. 1.* that *all the tribes of Israel came*, either themselves or by their representatives, to Hebron to make David king; now here we have an account of the quota which every tribe brought in *ready armed to the war*, in case there should have been any opposition, *ver. 23*. We may observe here,

1. That those tribes that lived nearest, brought in the fewest numbers; Judah but six thousand, *ver. 24*. Simeon but seven thousand, *ver. 25*. whereas Zebulun, that lay remote, brought fifty thousand, Asher forty thousand, and the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, one hundred and twenty thousand; not as if the next adjacent tribes were cold in the cause, but they shewed as much of their prudence in bringing few, since all the rest lay so near within call, as the others did of their zeal in bringing so many. The men of Judah had enough to do to entertain those that came from afar.

2. The Levites themselves, and the priests, called here the Aaronites, appeared very hearty in this cause, and were ready, if there were occasion, to fight for David, as well as pray for him, because they knew he was called of God to the government, *ver. 26, 27, 28*.

3. Even some of the kindred of Saul came over to David, *ver. 29*. not so many as of the other tribes, because a foolish affection for their own tribe, and a jealousy for the honour of it, kept many of them long in the sinking interest of Saul's family. Kindred should never over-rule conscience. Call no man so Father, but God.

4. It is said of most of these, that they were *mighty men of valour*, *ver. 25, 28, 30*. of others, that they were *expert in war*, *ver. 35, 36*. and of them all, that they *could keep rank*, *ver. 38*. They



They had a great deal of martial fire, and yet governable; and subject to the rules of order. Warm hearts, but cool heads.

5. Some were so considerate as to bring with them arms, and all instruments for war, *ver. 24, 33, 37.* for how could they think David should be able to furnish them?

6. The men of Issachar were the fewest of all; but two hundred, and yet as serviceable to David's interest, as those that brought in the greatest numbers; these few being in effect the whole tribe: for, (1.) They were men of *great conduct*, above any of their neighbours. Men that *had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.* They understood the natural times, could *discern the face of the sky*, were weather-wise, could advise their neighbours in the proper times for plowing, sowing, reaping, &c. The ceremonial times, the times appointed for the solemn feasts, therefore they are said to *call the people to the mountain*, Deut. xxxiii. 19. for almanacks were not then so common as now. Or rather, the political times; they understood publick affairs, the temper of the nation, and the tendencies of the present events: It is the periphrasis of statesmen, that they *know the times*, Esth. i. 13. Those of that tribe were great news-mongers, and had good intelligence from abroad: and they made a good use of it, they knew *what Israel ought to do*: from their observation and experience, they learned both their own and others duty and interest. In this critical juncture, they knew Israel ought to make David king: it was not only expedient but necessary; the present posture of affairs called for it. The men of Issachar dealt mostly in country business, and did not much intermeddle in publick affairs, which gave them an opportunity of observing others, and conversing with themselves. A stander-by sees sometimes more than a gamester. (2.) They were men of great interests, for *all their brethren were at their commandment.* The commonalty of that tribe having *bowed their shoulders to bear*, (Gen. xlix. 15.) the great men had them at their beck; hence we read of the *princes of Issachar*, Judg. v. 15. They knew how to rule, and the rest knew how to obey. It is happy indeed, when those that should lead are intelligent and judicious, and those who are to follow modest and obsequious.

7. It is said of them all, they engaged in this enterprize *with a perfect heart*, *ver. 38.* and particularly of the men of Zebulun, that they were *not of double heart*, *ver. 33.* They were in this matter *Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile.* And this was their perfection, that they were of one heart in it, *ver. 38.* None had any separate interest, but all for the publick good.

Lastly, The men of Judah, and others of the adjacent tribes, prepared for the victualling of their respective camps when they came to Hebron, *ver. 39, 40.* They that were at the least pains in travelling to this convention or congress of the states, thought themselves obliged to be at so much the more charge in entertaining the rest, that there might be something of an equality. A noble feast was made (was made for laughter, Ecclef. x. 19.) upon this occasion, for there was *joy in Israel*, *ver. 40.* And good reason, for *when the righteous bear rule, the city rejoiceth.* Thus when the throne of Christ is set up in a soul, there is, or ought to be great joy in that soul; and provision is made for the feasting of it, not as here, for two or three days, but for the whole life; nay, for eternity.

## C H A P. XIII.

In the foregoing chapter we had David made king, by which the civil government was happily settled; in this chapter care is taken about religion: (1.) David consults with the representatives of the people about bringing up the ark out of its obscurity into a publick place, and it is resolved on, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) With a great deal of solemnity and joy it is carried from Kirjath-jearim, *ver. 5—8.* (3.) Uzza is struck dead for touching it, which for the present spoils the solemnity, and stops the proceedings, *ver. 9—14.*

1. **A**ND David consulted with the captains of thousands, and hundreds, and with every leader.  
2. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves, unto us.  
3. And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.  
4. And all the congregation said, that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.  
5. So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt, even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the  
No. 29.

ark of God from Kirjath-jearim. 6. And David went up, and all Israel to Baalah, that is to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it. 7. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart, out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. 8. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

Here is, 1. David's pious proposal to bring up the ark of God to Jerusalem, that the royal city might be the holy city, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* This part of the story we had not in Samuel. We may observe in this proposal,

(1.) That as soon as David was warm in his throne, he had thoughts concerning the ark of God; *Let us bring that to us*, *ver. 3.* Two things he aimed at herein: 1. To do honour to God, by shewing respect to his ark, the token of his presence. As soon as he had power in his hand, he would use it for the advancement and encouragement of religion. Note, It ought to be the first and great care of those that are enriched and preferred, to honour God with their honours, and to serve him and the interests of his kingdom among men, with their wealth and power. Not what pompous thing shall I do now; or what pleasant thing; but what pious thing; to have the comfort and benefit of that sacred oracle. Let us bring it to us, not only that we may be a credit to it, but that it may be a blessing to us. They that honour God profit themselves. Note, It is the wisdom of those that are setting out in the world to take God's ark with them, and to make his oracles their counsellors, and his laws their rule. Those are likely to proceed in the favour of God, that thus begin in the fear of God.

(2.) That he consulted with the leaders of the people about it, *ver. 1.* Though it was without doubt a very good work, and being king he had authority to command the doing of it; yet he chose rather to do it by consultation. 1. That he might shew respect to the great men of the kingdom, and put honour upon them. Though they made him king, yet he would not rule with an high hand, We will and command, and it is our royal pleasure that you do so and so, and we will be obeyed. But, *If it seem good to you*, and you think that motion comes from the Lord our God, let us send out orders for this purpose. No prince that is wise, will covet to be absolute. The peoples allegiance is best secured by taking their concurrence in their representatives. Happy then art thou, O Britain! 2. That he might be advised by them in the manner of doing it; whether just now, whether publickly: David was a very intelligent man himself, and yet consulted with his captains; for *in multitude of counsellors there is safety.* It is wisdom to make use of others wisdom. 3. That they joining in it, it might pass the better for a national act, and so might procure a national blessing.

(3.) That he would have all the people summoned to attend on this occasion, both for the honour of the ark, and for the peoples satisfaction and edification, *ver. 2.* Observe, 1. He calls the common people brethren, which speaks his humility and condescension, notwithstanding his advancement, and the tender concern he had for them. Thus our Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call his people brethren, *Heb. ii. 11.* 2. He speaks of the people as a remnant that was escaped; *Our brethren that are left in all the land of Israel.* They had been under scattering providences: their wars with the Philistines, and with the house of Saul, had wasted the country, and cut off many, we now hope to see an end of these troubles; let them that are left be quickened by late judgments, and present mercies to seek unto God. 3. He takes care that the priests and Levites especially should be summoned to attend the ark, for it was their province in a particular manner. Thus christian magistrates should stir up ministers to do their duty when they see them remiss. 4. That all this is upon supposition, that it is of the Lord their God. Though it should seem good to you and me, yet if it be not of the Lord our God, we will not do it. Whatever we undertake, this must be our inquiry; Is it of the Lord, is it agreeable to his mind? Can we approve our selves to him in it? And may we expect that he will own us? (5.) That thus it was requisite they should amend what had been amiss in the last reign, and as it were atone for their neglect, for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul, and that was the reason things went so ill with us: let that original error be amended, and then we may hope to see our affairs in a better posture. Observe, 1. David makes no peevish reflections upon Saul; he doth not say, Saul never cared for the ark, at least in the latter end of his reign; but in general, *we inquired not at it*, making himself and others guilty of the neglect. It better becomes us to judge our selves than others. Humble good men lament their own share in  
10 Z national



national guilt, and take shame to themselves, *Dan. ix. 5, &c.*

2. The peoples ready agreement to this proposal, *ver. 4.* The thing was *right in the eyes of all the people*; no body could say to the contrary, but that it was a very good work, and very reasonable; so that it was resolved *nemine contradicente*, that they would do so. They that prudently propose a good work, and lead in it, will perhaps find a more ready concurrence in it than they expected. Great men know not what a great deal of good they are capable of doing by their influence on others.

3. The solemnity of bringing up the ark, *ver. 5, &c.* which we read before, *2 Sam. vi. 1, &c.* Here therefore we shall only observe, (1.) That it is worth while to travel far to attend the ark of God. They came out of all parts of the country, from *the river of Egypt*, the utmost part south, to the entering of Hemah, which lay furthest north, *ver. 5.* to grace this solemnity. (2.) That we have reason greatly to rejoice in the revival of neglected ordinances, and the return of the tokens of God's presence. When the light of religion shines out of obscurity, when it is openly and freely professed, is brought into reputation, and countenanced by princes and great ones, it is such a happy omen to a people, as is worthy to be welcomed with all possible expressions of joy. (3.) When after long disuse ordinances come to be revived, it is too common for even wise and good men to make some mistakes. Who would have thought that David should have made such a blunder as this, to carry the ark upon a cart? *ver. 7.* Because the Philistines so carried it, and a special providence drove the cart, *1 Sam. vi. 12.* he thought they might do so too; but we must walk by rule, not by example when it varies from the rule, no, not those examples that providence has owned.

9. ¶ And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. 10. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. 11. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza; wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day. 12. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? 13. So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 14. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.

This breach upon Uzza, which caused all the mirth to cease, we had an account of, *2 Sam. vi. 6, &c.*

1. Let the sin of Uzza warn us all to take heed of presumption, rashness, and irreverence in dealing about holy things, *ver. 9.* and not to think that a good intention will justify a bad action. In our communion with God, we must carefully watch over our own hearts, lest familiarity breed contempt, and we think God is any way beholden to us.

2. Let the punishment of Uzza convince us what a jealous God he is, with whom we have to do; his death, like that of Nadab and Abihu, proclaimed aloud, that God will be *sanctified in those that come nigh him*, *Lev. x. 3.* and that the nearer any are to him, the more displeased he is with their presumptions. Let us not dare to trifle with God in our approaches to him, and yet, let us through Christ *come boldly to the throne of grace*; for we are under the dispensation of liberty and grace, not of bondage and terror.

3. Let the damp this gave to the joy of Israel, be a memorandum to us always, to rejoice with trembling, and to *serve the Lord with fear*, even then when we *serve him with gladness*.

4. Let David's displeasure upon this occasion, caution us to take heed to our spirits, when we are under divine rebukes, lest, instead of submitting to God, we quarrel with him. If God be angry with us, shall we dare to be angry with him?

5. Let the stop this put to the solemnity, caution us not to be driven off from our duty, by those providences which are only intended to drive us off from our sins. David should have gone on with his work, notwithstanding the breach made upon Uzza, so might the breach have been made up.

Lastly, Let the blessing which the ark brought with it to the house of Obed-edom, encourage us to welcome God's ordinances into our houses, as those that believe the ark is a guest no body shall lose by; nor let it be the less precious to us, for its being to some a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. If the gospel be to some a favour of death unto death, as the ark was unto Uzza, yet let us receive it in the love of it, and it will be to us a favour of life unto life.

C H A P. XIV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) David's kingdom established, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) His family built up, *ver. 3—7.* (3.) His enemies the Philistines routed in two campaigns, *ver. 8—17.* This is repeated here from *2 Sam. xv. 11, &c.*

1. **N**OW Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons, and carpenters, to build him an house. 2. And David perceived that the LORD had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lift up on high, because of his people Israel. 3. ¶ And David took more wives at Jerusalem: and David begat more sons and daughters. 4. Now these are the names of his children which he had in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, 5. And Ibhar, and Eliphua, and Elpalet, 6. And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 7. And Eliphama, and Beeliada, and Eliphalet.

We may observe here,

1. There is no man that has such a sufficiency in himself, but he has need of his neighbours, and has reason to be thankful for their help. David had a very large kingdom, Hiram a very little one, and yet David cannot build him a house to his mind, unless Hiram furnish him with both workmen and materials, *ver. 1.* which is a reason why we should despise none, but as we have opportunity be obliging to all.

2. It is a great satisfaction to a wife man to be settled, and to a good man to see the special providence of God in his settlement. The people had made David king, but he could not be easy, nor think himself happy, till he perceived that *the Lord had confirmed him king over Israel*, *ver. 2.* Who shall unfix me, if God hath fixed me?

3. We must look upon all our advancements as designed for our usefulness. *David's kingdom was lift up on high*, not for his own sake, that he might look great; but because of his people Israel, that he might be a guide and protector to them. We are therefore blessed that we may be blessings. See *Gen. xii. 2.* We are not born, nor do we live for ourselves.

4. It is hard to thrive and not grow secure and indulgent to the flesh. It was David's infirmity, that when he was settled in his kingdom, he *took more wives*, *ver. 3.* yet the numerous issue he had, added to his honour and strength. Lo, *children are a heritage of the Lord*. We had an account of David's children, not only in Samuel, but in this book, *chap. iii. 1, &c.* and now here again; for it was their honour to have such a father.

8. ¶ And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went to seek David: and David heard of it, and went out against them. 9. And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 10. And David inquired of God, saying, Shall I go against the Philistines? and wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto him, Go up, for I will deliver them into thine hand. 11. So they came up to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there. There David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand, like the breaking forth of waters: therefore they called the name of that place, Baal-perazim. 12. And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burnt with fire. 13. And the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley. 14. Therefore David inquired again of God; and God said unto him, Go not up after them, turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees. 15. And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle: for God is gone forth before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. 16. David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. 17. And the fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.

This narrative of David's triumphs over the Philistines, is much the same with that, *2 Sam. v. 17, &c.*

1. Let the attack which the Philistines made upon David, forbid us to be secure in any settlement or advancement, and engage us to expect molestation in this world. When we are most easy,



easy, something or other may come to be a terror or vexation to us. Christ's kingdom will thus be insulted by the serpent's seed; especially when it makes any advances.

2. Let David's inquiring of God once and again upon occasion of the Philistines invading him, direct us in all our ways to acknowledge him, in distress to fly to him, when we are wronged to appeal to him, and when we know not what to do, to ask counsel at his oracles, to put ourselves under his conduct, and to beg of him to shew us a right way.

3. Let David's success, encourage us to resist our spiritual enemies in observance of divine directions, and in dependence on divine strength. Resist the devil and he shall flee, as the Philistines did before David.

4. Let the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry trees, direct us to attend God's motions, both in his providence, and in the influences of his Spirit. When we perceive God go before us, let us gird up our loins, gird on our armour, and follow him.

5. Let David's burning the gods of the Philistines, when they fell into his hands, teach us a holy indignation against idolatry, and all the remains of it.

6. Let David's thankful acknowledgment of the hand of God in his successes, direct us to bring all our sacrifices of praise to God's altar. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory.*

Lastly, Let the mighty fame and reputation of David, not only in his own kingdom, but among his neighbours, be looked upon as a type and figure of the exalted honour of the Son of David, *ver. 17. The fame of David went out into all lands; he was generally talked of, and admired by all people, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations: All looked upon him as a formidable enemy, and a desirable ally. Thus has God highly exalted our Redeemer, and given him a name above every name.*

## C H A P. XV.

*The bringing up of the ark to the city of David, was a very good work; it was resolved upon chap. xiii. 4. and attempted, but not perfected; it lay by the way in the house of Obed-edom. Now this chapter gives us an account of the completing of that good work. 1. How it was done more regularly than before. (1.) A place was prepared for it, ver. 1. (2.) The priests were ordered to carry it, ver. 2—15. (3.) The Levites had their offices assigned them in attending on it, ver. 16—24. 2. How it was done more successfully than before, ver. 25. (1.) The Levites made no blunder in their work, ver. 26. (2.) David and the people met with no damp upon their joy, ver. 27, 28. As for Michal's despising David, it was nothing, ver. 29.*

1. **A**ND David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. 2. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God, but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever. 3. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it. 4. And David assembled the children of Aaron and the Levites. 5. Of the sons of Kohath: Uriel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twenty. 6. Of the sons of Merari: Asaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred and twenty. 7. Of the sons of Gershon: Joel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and thirty. 8. Of the sons of Elizaphan: Shemaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred. 9. Of the sons of Hebron: Eliel the chief, and his brethren fourscore. 10. Of the sons of Uzziel: Amminadab the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twelve. 11. And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, 12. And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify your selves both ye and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel, unto the place that I have prepared for it. 13. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. 14. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. 15. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders, with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the LORD. 16. And David spake to the chief of the Levites, to appoint their brethren to be the singers with

instruments of musick, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. 17. So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah: and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kushi-ah. 18. And with them their brethren of the second degree, Zechariah, Ben, Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, the porters. 14. So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass. 20. And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaniah, with psalteries on Alamoth; 21. And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, and Azariah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel. 22. Chenaniah chief of the Levites was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful. 23. And Berechiah, and Elkanah were door-keepers for the ark. 24. And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer the priest did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obed-edom, and Jehiah were door-keepers for the ark.

Preparation is here made for the bringing of the ark home to the city of David, from the house of Obed-edom. It is here owned, that in the former attempt, though it was a very good work, and in it they sought God, yet they sought him not after the due order, *ver. 13.* We did not go about our work confidently, and therefore we sped so ill. Note, 1. It is not enough that we do that which is good, but we must do it well; not enough, that we seek God in a due ordinance, but we must seek him in a due order. 2. When we have suffered for our irregularities, we must learn thereby to be more regular; then we answer the end of chastisement.

Let us see how the matter was mended.

1. David now prepared a place for the reception of the ark, before he brought it to him; and thus he sought in the due order. He had not time to build a house, but he pitched a tent for it, *ver. 1.* probably, according to the pattern shewed to Moses in the mount, or as near it as might be, of curtains and boards. Observe, When he made houses for himself in the city of David, he prepared a place for the ark. Note, Wheresoever we build for ourselves, we must be sure to make room for God's ark, for a church in the house.

2. David now ordered, that the Levites or priests should carry the ark upon their shoulders. Now he bethought himself of that which he could not but know before, that none ought to carry the ark but the Levites, *ver. 2.* The Kohathites carried it in their ordinary marches, and therefore had no waggons allotted them, because their work was to bear upon their shoulders, *Numb. vii. 9.* But upon extraordinary occasions, as when they passed Jordan, and compassed Jericho, the priests carried it. This rule was express, and yet David himself forgot it, and put the ark upon a cart. Note, Even they that are very knowing in the word of God, yet have it not always so ready to them as were to be wished, when they have occasion to use it. Wise and good men may be guilty of an oversight, which, as soon as they are aware of, they will correct. David doth not go about to justify what had been done amiss, nor to lay the blame on others, but owns himself guilty with others of not seeking God in a due order, and now takes care not only to summon the Levites to the solemnity, as he did all Israel, *ver. 3.* and had done before, *chap. xiii. 2.* but to see that they were assembled, *ver. 4.* especially the sons of Aaron, *ver. 11.* To them he gives that solemn charge, *ver. 12.* You are the chief of the fathers of the Levites, therefore do you bring up the ark of the Lord. Note, Those that are advanced above others in dignity, it is expected they go before others in duty; you are the chief, and therefore more is expected from you than from others, both by way of service yourselves; and influence on the rest. You did it not at the first, neither did your duty yourselves, nor took care to instruct us, and we smarted for it, the Lord made a breach upon us. We have all smarted for your neglect: This has been by your means; see *Mal. i. 9.* therefore sanctify yourselves, and mind your business. When those that suffered for doing ill, thus learn to do better, the correction is well bestowed.

3. The Levites and priests were sanctified themselves, *ver. 14.* and were ready to carry the ark on their shoulders, according to the law, *ver. 15.* Note, Many that are very remiss in their duty, if they were but faithfully told of it, would reform, and do better. The breach upon Uzza, made the priests the more careful to sanctify themselves, *i. e.* to cleanse themselves from all ceremonial pollution, and to compose themselves for the solemn service of God, so as to strike a reverence upon the people. Some



Some are made examples, that others may be made exemplary, and very cautious.

4. Officers were appointed to be ready to bid the ark welcome, with all possible expressions of joy, *ver.* 16. David ordered the chief of the Levites to nominate those that they knew to be artists, for this service. Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were now first appointed, *ver.* 17. They undertook to sound with cymbals, *ver.* 19. others with psalteries, *ver.* 20. others with harps, on the Shemineth, or eighth, eight notes higher or lower than the rest, according to the rules of consort, *ver.* 21. Some that were priests, blew with the trumpet, *ver.* 24. as was usual at the removal of the ark, *Numb.* x. 8. and at solemn feasts, *Psal.* lxxxii. 3. And one was appointed for song, *ver.* 22. for he was skilful in it, could sing well himself, and instruct others. Note, As every man has received the gift, so he ought to minister the same, *1 Pet.* iv. 10. And those that excel in any endowment, should not only use it for common good themselves, but teach others also; and not grudge to make others as wise as themselves. This way of praising God by musical instruments had not hitherto been in use: But David being a prophet, instituted it by divine direction, and added it to the other cardinal ordinances of that dispensation, as the apostle calls them, *Heb.* ix. 10. The New Testament keeps up singing of psalms, but has not appointed church-musick. Some were appointed to be porters, *ver.* 18. others door-keepers for the ark, *ver.* 23, 24. and one of them was Obed-edom, who reckoned it, no doubt a place of honour, and accepted it as a recompence for the entertainment he had given to the ark. He had for three months been house-keeper to the ark, and indeed its landlord: But when he might not be so any longer, such an affection had he for it, that he was glad to be its door-keeper.

25. ¶ So David and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the covenant of the LORD, out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. 26. And it came to pass when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks, and seven rams. 27. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song, with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. 28. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. 29. ¶ And it came to pass as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window, saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

All things being got ready for the carrying of the ark to the city of David, and its reception there, we have here an account of the solemnity of its conveyance thither from the house of Obed-edom.

1. God helped the Levites that carried it. The ark was no very great burthen, that they that carried it needed an extraordinary help. But, (1.) It is good to take notice of the assistance of the divine providence, even in those things that fall within the compass of our natural powers: If God did not help us, we could not stir a step. (2.) In all our religious exercises, we must particularly derive help from heaven. See *Acts* xxvi. 22. All our sufficiency for holy duties is from God. 3. The Levites, perhaps, remembering the breach made upon Uzza, were ready to tremble when they took up the ark, but God helped them, *i. e.* he encouraged them to it, silenced their fears, and strengthened their faith. (4.) God helped them to do it decently and well, and without making any blunder. If we perform any religious duties, so as to escape a breach, and come off with our lives, we must own it was God that helped us; for had we been left to ourselves, we should have been guilty of some fatal miscarriages. God's ministers that bear the vessels of the Lord, have special need of divine help in their ministrations, that God in them may be glorified, and his church edified. And if God help the Levites, the people have the benefit of it.

2. When they experienced the tokens of God's presence with them, they offered sacrifices of praise to him, *ver.* 26. This also he helped them to do. They offered these bullocks and rams, perhaps, by way of atonement for the former error, that that might not now be remembered against them, as well as by way of acknowledgment for the help now received.

3. There were great expressions of rejoicing used; the sacred musick played, David danced, the singers sang, and the common people shouted, *ver.* 27, 28. This we had before, *2 Sam.* vi. 14, 15. Learn hence, 1. That we serve a good master, who delights to have his servants sing at their work. 2. That times of

publick reformation are, and should be times of publick rejoicing. Those are unworthy of the ark, that are not glad of it. 3. It is not any disparagement to the greatest of men, to shew themselves zealous in the acts of devotion. Michal indeed despised David, *ver.* 29. but her despising him, did not make him at all despicable: He did not value it himself, nor did any that were wise and good (and why should we covet the esteem of any but such?) think the worse of him.

## C H A P. XVI.

*This chapter concludes that great affair of the settlement of the ark in the royal city; and with it the settlement of the publick worship of God during the reign of David. Here is, (1.) The solemnity with which the ark was fixed, ver. 1—6. (2.) The psalm David gave to be sung on this occasion, ver. 7—36. (3.) The setting of the constant stated worship of God in order from thenceforward, ver. 37—43.*

1. **S**O they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt-sacrifices and peace-offerings before God. 2. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings, and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. 3. And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. 4. ¶ And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel: 5. Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom: and Jeiel with psalteries, and with harps: but Asaph made a sound with cymbals. 6. Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.

It was a glorious day when the ark of God was safely lodged in the tent David had pitched for it. That good man had his heart much upon it, could not sleep contentedly till it was done, *Psal.* cxxxii. 4. The circumstances of the ark were now, (1.) Better than what they had been. It had been obscure in a country town in the fields of the wood, now it is removed to a publick place, to the royal city, where all might have resort to it. It had been neglected, as a despised broken vessel; now it is attended with veneration, and God is inquired of by it. It had borrowed a room in a private house, which it enjoyed upon courtesy; now it has a habitation of its own, intire to itself, is set in the midst of it, and not crowded into a corner. Note, Though God's word and ordinances may be clouded and eclipsed for a time, they shall at length shine out of obscurity. Yet, (2.) They were much short of what was intended in the next reign, when the temple was to be built. This was but a tent, a poor mean dwelling, yet this was the tabernacle, the temple which David in his psalms oft speaks of with so much affection. David that pitched a tent for the ark, and stuck to it, did far better than Solomon that built a temple for it, and yet in his latter end turned his back upon it. The church's poorest times were its purest.

Now David is easy in his mind: The ark is fixed, and fixed near him; now see how he takes care,

1. That God have the glory of it. Two ways he gives him honour upon this occasion; (1.) By sacrifices, *ver.* 1. Burnt-offerings in adoration of his perfections; peace-offerings in acknowledgment of his favours. (2.) By songs; he appointed Levites to record this story in a song for the benefit of others, or to celebrate it themselves by *thanking and praising the God of Israel*, *ver.* 4. All our rejoicings must express themselves in thanksgiving to him, from whom all our comforts are received.

2. That the people have the joy of it. They shall fare the better for this day's solemnity, for he gives them all what was worth coming for, not only a royal treat, in honour of the day, *ver.* 3. in which David shewed himself generous to his subjects, as he had found God gracious to him. They, whose hearts are enlarged with holy joy, should shew it by being open-handed: But (which is far better) he gives them a  *blessing in the name of the Lord*, as a father, as a prophet, *ver.* 2. he prayed to God for them, and commended them to his grace. *In the name of the word of the Lord*, so the Targum, the essential eternal word, who is Jehovah, and through whom all blessings come to us.

7. ¶ Then on that day, David delivered first *this psalm* to thank the LORD, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. 8. Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his



his name, make known his deeds among the people. 9. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk you of all his wondrous works. 10. Glory ye in his holy name, let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 11. Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually. 12. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. 13. O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen ones. 14. He is the LORD our God, his judgments are in all the earth. 15. Be ye mindful always of his covenant: the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; 16. *Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac:* 17. And hath confirmed the same to Jacob, for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, 18. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance. 19. When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it: 20. And *when* they went from nation to nation, and from *one* kingdom to another people: 21. He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes, 22. *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 23. Sing unto the LORD all the earth: shew forth from day to day his salvation. 24. Declare his glory among the heathen: his marvellous works among all nations. 25. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. 26. For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. 27. Glory and honour are in his presence, strength and gladness are in his place. 28. Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 29. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering and come before him, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 30. Fear before him all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. 31. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth. 32. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. 33. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth. 34. O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 35. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise. 36. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever: and all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.

We have heard the thanksgiving psalm which David by the spirit composed, and delivered to the chief musician, to be sung upon occasion of the publick entry the ark made into the tent prepared for it; and some think he appointed this hymn to be daily used in the temple service, as duly as the day came; whatever other psalms they sung, they must not omit this. David had penned many psalms before this, some in the time of his troubles by Saul: This was composed before, but was now first delivered into the hand of Asaph, for the use of the church. It is gathered out of several psalms. From the beginning to ver. 23. is taken from Psal. cv. 1, &c. and then ver. 23. to ver. 34. is the whole 96th psalm, with little variation, ver. 34. is taken from Psalm cxxxvi. 1. and divers others; and then the two last verses are taken from the close of Psal. cvi. which, some think, warrants us to do likewise, to make up hymns out of David's psalms, a part of one, and a part of another, put together so as may be most proper to express and excite the devotion of Christians.

These psalms will be best expounded in their proper places (if the Lord will;) here we take them as they are put together, with design to thank the Lord, ver. 7. A great duty, to which we need to be excited, and in which we need to be assisted.

1. Let God be glorified in our praises, let this honour be the center in which all the lines meet. Let us glorify him by our thanksgivings, *Give thanks to the Lord*; by our prayers, *call on his name*, ver. 8. By our songs, *sing psalms unto him*; by our discourse, *talk ye of all his wondrous works*, ver. 9. glorify him as a great God, and greatly to be praised, ver. 25. as supreme God, (above all gods) as sole God; for all others are idols, ver. 26. glorify him as most bright and blessed in himself, *Glory and honour are in his presence*, ver. 27. as creator, *the Lord made the heavens*; as the ruler of the whole creation, *His judgments are in all the earth*, ver. 14. and as ours, *He is the Lord our God*. Thus must we give unto the Lord the glory due.

No. 29:

to his name, ver. 28, 29. and own it, and much more his due.

2. Let others be edified and instructed: *Make known his deeds among the people*, ver. 8. *Declare his glory among the heathen*, ver. 24. that those that are strangers to him, may be led into acquaintance with him, allegiance to him, and the adoration of him. Thus must we serve the interests of his kingdom among men, that all the earth may fear before him, ver. 30.

3. Let us be ourselves encouraged to triumph and trust in God. They that give glory to God's name, are allowed to glory in it, ver. 10. to value themselves upon their relation to God, and venture themselves upon his promise to them. *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord*, much more they that have found him. *Seek him and his strength, and his face*, i. e. seek him by the ark of his strength, in which he manifests himself.

4. Let the everlasting covenant, be the great matter of our joy and praise, ver. 15. *Be ye mindful of his covenant*. In the parallel place it is, *He will be ever mindful of it*, Psal. cv. 8. Seeing God never will forget it, we never must. The covenant is said to be commanded, because God has obliged us to obey the conditions of it; and because he has both authority to make the promise, and ability to make it good. This covenant was ancient, yet never to be forgotten. It was made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were long since dead, ver. 17, 18. yet still sure to the spiritual seed, and the promises of it pleadable.

5. Let God's former mercies to his people of old, to our ancestors and predecessors in profession, be commemorated by us now with thankfulness to his praise; let it be remembered, how God protected the patriarchs in their unsettled condition, when they came strangers to Canaan, and were sojourners in it, when they were few, and might easily have been swallowed up; when they were continually upon the remove, and so exposed, when there were many that bore him ill will, and sought to do them mischief; yet no man was suffered to do them wrong, not the Canaanites, Philistines, Egyptians; kings were reprov'd, and plagued for their sakes. Pharaoh was so, and Abimelech. They were the anointed of the Lord, sanctified by his grace, sanctified to his glory, had received the unction of the Spirit. They were his prophets, instructed in the things of God themselves, and commissioned to instruct others; (and prophets are said to be anointed, 1 Kings xix. 16. Isa. lxi. 1.) and therefore if any touch them they touch the apple of God's eye, if any harm them, it is at their peril, ver. 19,—22.

6. Let the great salvation of the Lord be, especially, the subject of our praises, ver. 23. *Shew forth from day to day his salvation*, that is, (saith bishop Patrick) his promised salvation by Christ. We have reason to celebrate that from day to day, for we daily receive the benefit of it, and it is a subject that can never be exhausted.

7. Let God be praised by a due and constant attendance upon him in the ordinances he has appointed; *bring an offering*, then the fruit of the ground, now the fruit of the lips, of the heart, Heb. xiii. 15. and worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the holy place, and in a holy manner, ver. 29. Holiness is the beauty of the Lord, the beauty of all sanctified souls, and all religious performances.

8. Let God's universal monarchy be the fear and joy of all people: Let us reverence it, *fear before him all the earth*, and let us rejoice in it: *Let the heavens be glad and rejoice*, because the Lord reigns; and that establisheth the world, so that though it be moved, it cannot be removed, nor the measures broken, which infinite wisdom has taken in the government of it, ver. 30, 31.

9. Let the prospect of the judgment to come, possess us with an awful pleasure. Let the earth and sea, fields and woods, though in the great day of the Lord they will all be consumed, yet rejoice that he will come, he doth come to judge the earth, ver. 32, 33.

10. In the midst of our praises, we must not forget to pray for the succour and relief of those saints and servants of God that are in distress, ver. 35. *Save us, gather us, deliver us from the heathen*, those of us that are scattered, and oppressed: When we are rejoicing in God's favours to us, we must remember our afflicted brethren, and pray for their salvation and deliverance as our own. We are members one of another, and therefore when we mean, Lord save them, it is not improper to say, Lord save us.

Lastly, Let us make God the alpha and omega of all our praises. He began, ver. 8. *Give thanks to the Lord*, he concludes, ver. 36. *Blessed be the Lord*. And whereas in the place whence this doxology is taken, (Psal. cvi. 48.) it is added, let all the people say Amen, Hallelujah; here we find they did according to that directory; *All the people said Amen, and praised the Lord*. When the Levites had finished this psalm of prayer and praise, then, and not till then, the people that attended signified their consent and concurrence, by saying Amen. And so they praised the Lord, much affected, no doubt, with this newly instituted way of devotion, which had been hitherto used in the schools of the prophets only, 1 Sam. x. 5. And if this way of praising God, please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock that



has horns and hoofs, the humble shall see it and be glad, Psal. lxxix. 31, 32.

37. ¶ So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, Afaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required: 38. And Obed-edom, with their brethren, threescore and eight: Obed-edom also the son of Jeduthun, and Hofah to be porters: 39. And Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD, in the high place that was at Gibeon, 40. To offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD, upon the altar of burnt-offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel: 41. And with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever: 42. And with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets, and cymbals, for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God: and the sons of Jeduthun were porters. 43. And all the people departed every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.

The worship of God, is not only to be the work of a solemn day now and then, brought in to grace a triumph, but it ought to be the work of every day. David therefore settles it here for a constancy; puts it into a method, which he obliged those that officiated to observe in their respective posts.

In the tabernacle of Moses, and afterwards in the temple of Solomon, the ark and the altar were together; but ever since Eli's time they had been separated; and still continued so till the temple was built. I cannot conceive what reason there was, why David, who knew the law, and was zealous for it, did not either bring the ark to Gibeon, where the tabernacle and the altar were, or bring them to mount Zion, where the ark was: Perhaps, the curtains and hangings of Moses's tabernacle were so worn with time and weather, that they were not fit to be removed, nor fit to be a shelter for the ark, and yet he would not make all new, but only a tent for the ark, because the time was at hand when the temple should be built. Whatever was the reason, all David's time they were asunder; but he took care that neither of them should be neglected.

1. At Jerusalem where the ark was, Afaph and his brethren were appointed to attend, to minister before the ark continually, with songs of praise, as every day's work required, ver. 37. No sacrifices were offered there, nor incense burnt, because the altars were not there; but David's prayers were directed as incense, and the lifting up of his hands as the evening-sacrifice, Psal. cxli. 2. So early did spiritual worship take place of ceremonial.

2. Yet the ceremonial worship being of divine institution, must by no means be omitted, and therefore at Gibeon were the altars, where the priests attended, for their work was to sacrifice and burn incense, and that they did continually, morning and evening, according to the law of Moses, ver. 39, 40. These must be kept up, because, however in their own nature they were inferior to the moral services of prayer and praise, yet as they were types of the meditation of Christ, they had a great deal of honour put upon them, and the observance of them was of mighty consequence. Here Zadok attended to preside in the service of the altar, as (it is probable) Abiathar settled at Jerusalem, to attend the ark, because he had the breast-plate of judgment, which must be consulted before the ark; which is the reason why we read that in David's time, both Zadok and Abiathar were the priests, 2 Sam. viii. 17.—xxi. 25. One, where the altar was, and the other where the ark was. At Gibeon where the altars were, David also appointed singers to give thanks to the Lord, and the burthen of all their songs must be, for his mercy endureth for ever, ver. 41. They did it with musical instruments of God, such instruments as were appointed and appropriated to this service, not such as they used on other occasions. Between common mirth and holy joy, there is a vast difference, and the limits and distances between them, must be carefully observed and kept up.

Matters being thus settled, and the affairs of religion put into a happy channel, (1.) The people were satisfied, and went home pleased. (2.) David returned to bless his house, resolving to keep up his family-worship still, which publick-worship must not supersede.

#### CHAP. XVII.

This excellent chapter is the same with 2 Sam. vii. It will be worth while to look back upon what was there said upon it. Two things in general we have in it, (1.) God's gracious acceptance of David's purpose to build him an house, and the promise he made thereupon, ver. 1—15. (2.) David's gra-

cious acceptance of God's good promise to build him a house, and the prayer he made thereupon, ver. 16—27.

1. NOW it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains. 2. Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart, for God is with thee. 3. ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, 4. Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt build me an house to dwell in. 5. For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel, unto this day, but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. 6. Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel (whom I commanded to feed my people) saying, Why have ye not built me an house of cedars? 7. Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldst be ruler over my people Israel: 8. And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth. 9. Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more: (as at the beginning, 10: And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel) moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore, I tell thee, that the LORD will build thee an house. 11. ¶ And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons, and I will establish his kingdom. 12. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. 13. I will be his father, and he shall be my son, and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee. 14. But I will settle him in mine house, and in my kingdom for ever, and his throne shall be established for evermore. 14. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

Let us observe here,

1. How desirous and solicitous good people should be, to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world, to the utmost of their capacity: David could not be easy in a house of cedar, while the ark was lodged within curtains, ver. 1. The concerns of the publick should always be near our hearts. What pleasure can we take in our own prosperity, if we see not the good of Jerusalem? When David is advanced to wealth and power, see what his cares and projects are; not what shall I do for my children to get portions for them: what shall I do to fill my coffers, and enlarge my dominions? But what shall I do for God, to serve and honour him. They that are contriving where to bestow their fruits and their goods, would do well to enquire, what condition the ark is in, and whether some may not be well bestowed upon it.

2. How ready God's prophets should be to encourage every good purpose. Nathan was no sooner aware of David's good design, but he bid him go and do all that was within his heart, ver. 2. for he had no reason to think any other, but that God was with him in it. Ministers should stir up the gifts and graces that are in others, as well as in themselves.

3. How little God affects external pomp and splendor in his service. His ark was content with a tabernacle, ver. 5. and he never so much as mentioned the building of a house for it; no, not when he had fixed his people in great and goodly cities which they builded not, Deut. vi. 10. He commanded the judges to feed his people, but never bid them build him a house, ver. 6. Good reason why, we should be content a while with mean accommodations; God's ark was so.

4. How graciously God accepts his peoples good purposes, yea, though he himself prevents the performance of them. David must not build this house, ver. 4. He must prepare for it, but not do it; as Moses must bring Israel within sight of Canaan, but must then leave it to Joshua to put them in possession of it. It is the prerogative of Christ to be both the author and finisher of his work. Yet he must not think that, because he was not permitted to build the temple, (1.) His preferment was



was in vain; no, *I took thee from the sheep-cote*, though not to be a builder of the temple, yet to be ruler over my people *Israel*, that is honour enough for thee, leave the other to one that shall come after thee, *ver. 7.* Why should one man think to ingross all the business, and to bring every good work to perfection; let something be left for them that succeed. God had given him victories, and made him a name, *ver. 8.* and further, intended by him to establish his people *Israel*, and secure them against their enemies, *ver. 9.* That must be his work, who is a man of war, and fit for it, and he must let building of churches alone, for one that was never cut out for a soldier. Nor, (2.) Must he think that his good purpose was in vain, and that he should lose the reward of it; no, it being God's act to prevent the execution of it, he shall be as fully recompensed as if he had done it. *The Lord will build thee an house*, and annex the crown of *Israel* to it, *ver. 10.* If there be a willing mind, it shall not only be accepted, but thus rewarded. Nor, (3.) Must he think that because he might not do this good work, therefore it would never be done, and that it was in vain to think of it; no, *I will raise up thy seed, and he shall build me an house*, *ver. 11, 12.* God's temple shall be built in the time appointed, though we may not have the honour of helping to build it, or the satisfaction of seeing it built. Nor, (4.) Must he confine his thoughts to the temporal prosperity of his family, but must entertain himself with the prospect of the kingdom of the Messiah, who should descend from his loins, and whose throne should be *established for evermore*, *ver. 14.* Solomon was not himself so settled in God's house, as he should have been, nor was his family settled in the kingdom: But there shall one descend from thee, whom I will settle in my house, and in my kingdom; which intimates, that he should be both a high-priest over the house of God, and should have the sole administration of the affairs of God's kingdom among men, all power both in heaven and in earth, in the house, and in the kingdom, in the church, and in the world: He shall be *a priest upon his throne*, and *the counsel of peace shall be between them both*, and *he shall build the temple of the Lord*, *Zech. vi. 12, 13.*

16. ¶ And David the king came, and sat before the LORD, and said, Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 17. And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God, for thou hast also spoken of thy servants house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD God. 18. What can David speak more to thee for the honour of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant. 19. O LORD, for thy servants sake, and according to thine own heart hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. 20. O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 21. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people *Israel*, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt? 22. For thy people *Israel* didst thou make thine own people for ever, and thou, LORD, becamest their God. 23. Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, be established for ever, and do as thou hast said. 24. Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God of *Israel*, even a God to *Israel*: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee. 25. For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant, that thou wilt build him an house: therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee. 26. And now, LORD (thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant) 27. Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blest, O LORD, and it shall be blessed for ever.

We have here David's solemn address to God, in answer to the gracious message he had now received from him. By faith he receives the promises, embraceth them, and is persuaded of them, as the patriarchs, *Heb. xi. 13.* How humbly doth he here abase himself, and acknowledge his own unworthiness! How highly doth he advance the name of God, and admire his condescending grace and favour! With what devout affections doth he magnify the God of *Israel*, and what a value has he for the *Israel* of God! With what assurance doth he build upon the promise, and with what a lively faith doth he put it in suit!

What an example is this to us of humble, believing, fervent prayers! The Lord enable us all thus to seek him! These things were largely observed, *2 Sam. vii.* We shall therefore here observe only those few expressions, in which the prayer, as we find it here, differs from the record of it there, and has something added to it.

1. That which is there expressed by way of question; *Is this the manner of men, O Lord God!* Is here an acknowledgment, *Thou hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree.* Thou hast made me a great man, and then treated me accordingly. God, by the covenant relations into which he admits believers, the titles he gives them, the favours he bestows on them, and the preparations he has made for them, regards them according to the estate of men of high degree, though they are mean and vile. Having himself distinguished them, he treats them as persons of distinction, according to the quality he has been pleased to put upon them. Some give these words here another reading, *Thou hast looked upon me in the form of a man, who art in the highest the Lord God;* or, *thou hast made me to see according to the form of a man, the majesty of the Lord God.* And so it points at the Messiah; for as Abraham, so David saw his day, and was glad; saw it by faith, saw him in fashion as a man, the word made flesh; and yet saw his glory as that of the only begotten of the Father. And this was it, that God spoke concerning his house, for a great while to come, the foresight of which affected him more than any thing. And let it not be thought strange, that David should speak so plainly of the two natures of Christ, who in spirit called him Lord, though he knew he was to be his son, *Psal. cx. 1.* and foresaw him lower than the angels for a little while, but afterwards crowned with glory and honour, *Heb. ii. 6, 7.*

2. What can David say more unto thee, it is here added, for the honour of thy servant, *ver. 18.* Note, The honour God puts upon his servants, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, is so great, that they need not, they cannot desire to be more highly honoured. Were they to sit down and wish, they could not speak more for their own honour, than what the word of God has spoken.

3. It is very observable, that what in Samuel, is said to be for thy word's sake, is here said to be for thy servant's sake, *ver. 18.* Jesus Christ is both the word of God, *Rev. xix. 13.* and the servant of God, *Isa. xlii. 1.* and it is for his sake, upon the score of his mediation, that the promises are both made, and made good to all believers; it is in him, that they are *yea, and amen.* For his sake it is done, for his sake it is made known; to him we owe all this greatness, from him we are to expect all these great things; they are the unsearchable riches of Christ, which if by faith we see in themselves, and see in the hand of the Lord Jesus, we cannot but magnify them as great things, the only true greatness, and speak honourably of them accordingly.

4. In Samuel the Lord of hosts is said to be the God over *Israel*, here he is said to be the God of *Israel*, even a God to *Israel*, *ver. 24.* His being the God of *Israel*, speaks his having the name of their God, and so calling himself; his being a God to *Israel*, speaks his answering the name, his filling up the relation, and doing all that to them which might be expected from him. There were those that were called gods of such and such nations, gods of Assyria and Egypt, gods of Hamath and Arpad; but they were no gods to them, for they stood them in no stead at all, were mere cyphers, and nothing but a name: but the God of *Israel* is a God to *Israel*; all his attributes and perfections redound to their real benefit and advantages: *Happy therefore, thrice happy is the people whose God is Jehovah;* for he will be a God to them, a God all-sufficient.

5. The closing words in Samuel are, *With thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever:* that is the language of a holy desire. But the closing words here are the language of a most holy faith; *for thou blestest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever*, *ver. 27.* (1.) He is therefore encouraged to beg a blessing, because God had intimated to him, that he had blessings in store for him and his family; *thou blestest, O Lord*, and therefore unto thee shall all flesh come for a blessing; unto thee do I come for the blessing promised to me. Promises are intended to direct and excite prayer. Has God said, *I will bless;* let our hearts answer, *Lord, bless me.* (2.) He is therefore earnest for the blessing, because those whom God blesteth are truly and eternally blessed. *Thou blestest, and it shall be blessed:* Men can but beg the blessing, it is God that commands it; what he designs he effects; what he promiseth, he performs; saying and doing are not two things with him. Nay, *it shall be blessed for ever.* His blessings shall not be revoked, cannot be opposed, and the benefits conferred by them, are such as will survive time and days. David's prayer concludes as God's promise did, *ver. 14.* with that which is for ever. God's word looks at things eternal, and so should our desires and hopes.



## C H A P. XVIII.

*David's piety and his prayer we had an account of in the foregoing chapter; here follows immediately that which one might reasonably expect, an account of his prosperity; for they that seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, as David did, shall have other things added to them, as far as God sees good for them. Here is, 1. His prosperity abroad. He conquered the Philistines, ver. 1. The Moabites, ver. 2. The king of Zobah, ver. 3, 4. The Syrians, ver. 5—8. Made the king of Hamath his tributary, ver. 9—11. and the Edomites, ver. 12, 13. 2. His prosperity at home. His court and kingdom flourished, ver. 14—17. All this we had an account of before, 2 Sam. viii.*

1. **N**OW after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines. 2. And he smote Moab; and the Moabites became Davids servants, and brought gifts. 3. ¶ And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath, as he went to establish his dominion by the river Euphrates. 4. And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also houghed all the chariot-horses, but reserved of them an hundred chariots. 5. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadarezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. 6. Then David put garisons in Syria-Damascus, and the Syrians became Davids servants, and brought gifts. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. 7. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadarezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8. Likewise from Tibbath, and from Chun, cities of Hadarezer, brought David very much brass, wherewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass.

*After this, it is said, ver. 1. David did those great exploits. After the sweet communion he had had with God by the word and prayer in the foregoing chapter, he went on in his work with an extraordinary vigour and courage, conquering, and to conquer. Thus Jacob after his vision lift up his feet, Gen. xxix. 1.*

We have taken a view of these victories before, and shall now only observe,

1. Those that have been long enemies to the Israel of God, will be brought down at last. The Philistines had for several generations been vexatious to Israel, but now David subdued them, ver. 1. Thus shall all opposing rule, principality and power, be at the end of time put down by the Son of David, and the most inveterate enemies shall fall before him.

2. Such is the uncertainty of this world, that many times men lose their wealth and power, then when they think to confirm it. Hadarezer was smitten as he went to establish his dominion, ver. 3.

3. A horse is a vain thing for safety, so David said, Psal. xxxiii. 17. and it seems he believed what he said, for he houghed the chariot horses, ver. 4. being resolved not to trust to them, (Psal. xx. 7.) he would not use them.

4. The enemies of God's church are oft made to ruin themselves by helping one another, ver. 5. The Syrians of Damascus were smitten when they came to help Hadarezer. When hand thus joins in hand, they shall not only not go unpunished, but thereby they shall be gathered as sheaves into the floor, Mic. iv. 11, 12.

5. The wealth of the sinner sometimes proves to have been laid up for the just. The Syrians brought gifts, ver. 6. Their shields of gold, and their brass was brought to Jerusalem, ver. 7, 8. As the tabernacle was built of the spoils of the Egyptians, so the temple of the spoils of other Gentile nations; a happy presage of the interest the Gentiles should have in the gospel church.

9. ¶ Now when Tou king of Hamath heard how David had smitten all the host of Hadarezer, king of Zobah: 10. He sent Hadoram his son to king David, to enquire of his welfare, and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadarezer, and smitten him (for Hadarezer had warred with Tou) and with him all manner of vessels of gold, and silver, and brass. 11. ¶ Them also king David dedicated unto the LORD, with the silver and the gold that he brought from all these na-

tions; from Edom, and from Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines, and from Amalek. 12. Moreover, Abisai the son of Zeruiah slew of the Edomites in the valley of salt, eighteen thousand. 13. ¶ And he put garisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became Davids servants. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. 14. ¶ So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people. 15. And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host, Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, recorder. 16. And Zadok the son of Abiathar, and Abimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests, and Shausa was scribe. 17. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites, and the Pelethites: and the sons of David were chief about the king.

Here let us learn,

1. That it is our interest to make those our friends, who have the presence of God with them. The king of Hamath hearing of David's great successes, sent to congratulate him, and to court his favour with a noble present, ver. 9, 10. It is in vain to contend with the Son of David: *Kiss the Son therefore, lest he be angry*: Let the kings and judges of the earth, and all inferior people too, be thus wise, thus instructed. The presents we are to bring him are not *vessels of gold and silver*, as here, those shall be welcome to him, who have no such presents to bring; but our hearts and sincere affections, our own selves, our whole selves, we must present to him as living sacrifices.

2. That what God blest us with, we must honour him with. The presents of his friends, as well as the spoils of his enemies, *David dedicated unto the Lord*, ver. 11. i. e. he laid them up towards the building and enriching of the temple. That is most truly and most comfortably our own, which we have consecrated unto the Lord, and which we use for his glory. Let our merchandise and our hire be holiness unto the Lord, Isa. xxiii. 18.

3. That those who take God along with them wherever they go, may expect to prosper, and be preserved wherever they go. It was said before, ver. 6. and here again, ver. 13. that *the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went*. Those are always under the eye of God, that have God always in their eye.

4. God gives men power, not that they may look great with it, but that they may do good with it. When David reigned over all Israel, he *executed judgment and justice among all his people*, and so answered the end of his elevation: He was not so intent on his conquests abroad, as to neglect the administration of justice at home. Herein he served the purposes of the kingdom of providence, and of that God, who *sits in the throne judging right*; and was an eminent type of the Messiah, the *sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre*.

## C H A P. XIX.

*The story is here repeated of David's war with the Ammonites, and the Syrians their allies, and the victories he obtained over them, which we read just as it is here related, 2 Sam. x. Here is, (1.) David's civility to the king of Ammon, in sending an embassy of condolence to him on occasion of his father's death, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His great incivility to David, in the base usage he gave to his ambassadors, ver. 3, 4. (3.) David's just resentment of it, and the war which broke out thereupon, in which the Ammonites did politickly in bringing the Syrians to their assistance, ver. 6, 7. Joab did bravely, ver. 8—13. and Israel was once and again victorious, ver. 14—19.*

1. **N**OW it came to pass after this, that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon died, and his son reigned in his stead. 2. And David said, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father shewed kindness to me. And David sent messengers, to comfort him concerning his father: so the servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon, to Hanun, to comfort him. 3. But the princes of Ammon said to Hanun, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? are not his servants come unto thee, for to search, and to overthrow, and to spy out the land? 4. Wherefore Hanun took Davids servants, and shaved them, and cut off their garments in the midst hard by their buttocks, and sent them away. 5. Then there went certain, and told David how the men were served; and he sent to meet



meet them (for the men were greatly ashamed) and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and *then* return.

Let us here observe,

1. That it becomes good people to be neighbourly, and especially to be grateful. David will pay respect to Hanun, because he is his neighbour; and religion teaches us to be civil and obliging to all; to honour all men; and to be ready to do all offices of kindness to those we live among: and difference in religion must be no obstruction to it. But besides this, David remembers the kindness which his father shewed to him. They that have received kindness, must return it as they have ability and opportunity: they that have received it from the parents, must return it to the children, when they are gone.

2. That, as saith the proverb of the antients, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. The vile person will speak villainy, and the instruments of the churl will be evil, to *destroy those with lying words that speak right*, Isa. xxxii. 6, 7. They that are ill, and design ill themselves, are apt to be jealous, and to suspect ill of others without cause. Hanun's servants suggested that David's ambassadors came as spies; as if so great and mighty a man as David, needed to do so mean a thing. If he had any design upon the Ammonites, he could effect it by open force, and had no occasion for any fraudulent practices: or, as if a man of such virtue and honour would do so ill a thing. Yet Hanun hearkened to the suggestion, and against the law of nations treated David's ambassadors villainously.

3. Masters ought to protect their servants, and with the greatest tenderness to concern themselves for them, if they come by any loss or damage in their service; David did so for his ambassadors, ver. 5. Christ will do so for his ministers; and let all masters thus *give unto their servants that which is just and equal*.

6. ¶ And when the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the children of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia, and out of Syria-maachah, and out of Zobah. 7. So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maacah and his people, who came and pitched before Medeba. And the children of Ammon gathered themselves together from their cities, and came to battle. 8. And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. 9. And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array before the gate of the city: and the kings that were come *were* by themselves in the field. 10. Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him, before and behind, he chose out of all the choice of Israel, and put *them* in array against the Syrians. 11. And the rest of the people he delivered unto the hand of Abishai his brother, and they set *themselves* in array against the children of Ammon. 12. And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee. 13. Be of good courage, and let us behave our selves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God: and let the LORD do *that which is good* in his sight. 14. So Joab and the people that *were* with him, drew nigh before the Syrians, unto the battle; and they fled before him. 15. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem. 16. ¶ And when the Syrians saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they sent messengers, and drew forth the Syrians that *were* beyond the river: and Shophach the captain of the host of Hadarezer *went* before them. 17. And it was told David, and he gathered all Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came upon them, and set *the battle* in array against them: so when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him. 18. But the Syrians fled before Israel, and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand men, *which fought in* chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host. 19. And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants: neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more.

Nº. 29.

We may see here,

1. How the hearts of sinners that are marked for ruin, are oftentimes hardened to their destruction. The children of Ammon saw that they *had made themselves odious to David*, ver. 6. and then it had been their wisdom to have desired conditions of peace, to have humbled themselves, and offered any satisfaction for the injury they had done him; the rather, because they had made themselves not only odious to David, but obnoxious to the justice of God, who is *King of nations*, and will assert the injured rights, and maintain the violated laws of nations. But instead of this, they prepared for war, and so brought upon themselves, by David's hand, those desolations which he never intended them.

2. How the courage of brave men is heightened and invigorated by difficulties; when Joab saw that *the battle was set against him before and behind*, ver. 10. instead of meditating a retreat, he doubled his resolution, and though he could not double, he divided his army, and not only spoke, but acted like a gallant man, that had a great presence of mind when he saw himself surrounded. He engaged with his brother for a mutual assistance, ver. 12. excited himself and the rest of the officers to act vigorously in their respective posts, with an eye to God's glory, and their country's good, not to any honour and advantage of their own, and then left the issue with God, *Let the Lord do that which is right in his sight*.

3. How vain the greatest art and strength is against justice and equity! The Ammonites played their cards as well as men could possibly do, brought as good a force into the field, and disposed it with as much policy; yet having a bad cause, and acting in defence of wrong, it would not do, they were put to the worst. Right will prevail, and triumph at last.

4. To how little purpose it is for those to rally again, and reinforce themselves, that have not God on their side! The Syrians, though no way concerned in the merits of the cause, but serving only as mercenaries to the Ammonites, when they were beaten, thought themselves concerned to retrieve their honour, and therefore called in the assistance of the Syrians on the other side Euphrates, but to no purpose, still they *fled before Israel*, ver. 18. they lost seven thousand men, who are said to be the men of seven hundred chariots, 2 Sam. x. 18. For as now in a man of war for sea-service, they allot ten men to a gun, so then in land-service ten men to a chariot.

5. Those that have *meddled with strife that belongs not to them*, and have found that they *meddled to their own hurt*, do well to learn wit at length, and meddle no further. The Syrians finding that Israel was the conquering side, not only broke off their alliance with the Ammonites, and would help them no more, ver. 19. *but made peace with David, and became his servants*. Let those that have in vain stood it out against God, be thus wise for themselves, and *agree with him quickly, while they are in the way*; let them become his servants, for they cannot but see themselves undone if they be his enemies.

#### C H A P. XX.

Here is a repetition of the story of David's wars, (1.) *With the Ammonites, and the taking of Rabbah*, ver. 1—3. (2.) *With the giants of the Philistines*, ver. 4—8.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the times that kings go out to battle, Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah (but David tarried at Jerusalem) and Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it. 2. And David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and *there were* precious stones in it, and it was set upon David's head, and he brought also exceeding much spoil out of the city. 3. And he brought out the people that were in it: and cut *them* with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes: even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

How the army of the Ammonites and their allies was routed in the field, we read in the foregoing chapter: here we have the destruction of Rabbah, the metropolis of their kingdom, ver. 1. the putting of their king's crown upon David's head, ver. 2. and the great severity that was used towards the people, ver. 3. This we had a more full account of, 2 Sam. xi. and xii. and cannot but remember by this sad token, that while Joab was besieging Rabbah, David fell into that great sin, in the matter of Uriah.

But it is observable, that though the rest of the story be repeated, that is not; but only a hint given of it in those words, which lie here in a parenthesis (*But David tarried at Jerusalem*). If he had been abroad with his army, he had been out of the way of that of temptation, but indulging his ease, he fell into uncleanness.



ness. Now as the relating of that sin David fell into, is an instance of the impartiality and fidelity of the sacred writers; so the avoiding of the repetition of it here, when there was a fair occasion given to speak of it again, is designed to teach us, That though there may be a just occasion to speak of the faults and miscarriages of others, yet we should not take delight in the repetition of them; that should always be looked upon as an unpleasing subject; which though sometimes one cannot help falling upon, yet one would not choose to dwell upon, nor love to rake in a dunghill. Those persons or actions we can say no good of, we had best say nothing of.

4. ¶ And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines, at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite, slew Sippai *that was* of the children of the giant, and they were subdued. 5. And there was war again with the Philistines, and Elhanan the son of Jair, slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear-staff *was* like a weavers beam. 6. And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of great stature, whose fingers and toes *were* four and twenty, six on each hand, and six on each foot: and he also was the son of the giant. 7. But when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, Davids brother, slew him. 8. These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hands of his servants.

The Philistines were pretty well subdued, chap. xviii. 1. but as it was in the destruction of the Canaanites by Joshua, the sons of Anak were last subdued, Josh. xi. 21. so here in the conquest of the Philistines, the giants of Gath were last brought down: In the conflicts between grace and corruption, there are some sins, like these giants, keep their ground a great while, and are not mastered without much difficulty, and long struggle: but judgment will be brought forth unto victory at last.

Observe, 1. We never read of giants among the Israelites, as we do of giants among the Philistines: giants of Gath, but not giants of Jerusalem: the growth of God's plants is in usefulness, not in bulk. They that covet to have cubits added to their stature, do not consider that it will but make them more unwieldy. In the balance of the sanctuary, David far outweighs Goliath.

2. The servants of David, though men of ordinary stature, were quite too hard for the giants of Gath in every encounter; because they had God on their side, who takes pleasure in abasing the lofty looks, and mortifying the giants that are in the earth; as he did of old by the deluge, though they were men of renown. Never let the church's friends be disheartened by the power and pride of the church's enemies; we need not fear great men against us, while we have the great God for us. What will a finger more on each hand do, or a toe more on each foot, in contest with omnipotence?

3. These giants defied Israel, ver. 7. and were thus made to pay for their insolence. None are more visibly marked for ruin than those that reproach God and his Israel. God will do great things, rather than suffer the enemy to behave themselves proudly, Deut. xxxii. 27. As David's victories, so those of the Son of David are gradual: *We see not yet all things put under him*; but it will be seen shortly: and death itself, the last enemy, like these giants, triumphed over.

## C H A P. XXI.

*As this rehearsal makes no mention of David's sin in the matter of Uriah, so neither of the troubles of his family that followed upon it; not a word of Absalom's rebellion, or Sheba's; but David's sin in numbering the people is here related, because in the atonement made for that sin, an intimation was given of the spot of ground on which the temple should be built. Here is, 1. David's sin in forcing Joab to number the people, ver. 1—4. (2.) David's sorrow for what he had done, as soon as he perceived the sinfulness of it, ver. 5—8. (3.) The sad dilemma (or trilemma rather) he was brought to, when it was put to him to choose how he would be punished for this sin, and what rod he would be beaten with, ver. 9—13. (4.) The woful havock which was made by the pestilence in the country, and the narrow escape which Jerusalem had of being laid waste by it, ver. 14—16. (5.) David's repentance, and sacrifice upon this occasion, and the staying of the plague thereupon, ver. 18—30. This awful story we have already met with, and meditated upon, 2 Sam. xxiv.*

1. **A**ND Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. 2. And David said to Joab, and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the

number of them to me, that I may know it. 3. And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, *are they not all my lords servants?* why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel? 4. Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab: wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. 5. ¶ And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all *they of* Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah *was* four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. 6. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab.

Numbring the people, one would think, was no ill thing; why should not the shepherd know the count of his flock? But God sees not as man sees: It is plain it was ill done of David to do it, and a great provocation to God; because he did it in the pride of his heart; and there is no sin that has in it more of contradiction, and therefore more of offence to God, than pride. The sin was David's, he alone must bear the blame of it: But here we are told,

1. How active the tempter was in it, ver. 1. *Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David* to do it. It is said, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. *that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David* to do it. The righteous judgments of God are to be observed and acknowledged even in the sins and unrighteousness of men. We are sure God is not the author of sin, he *tempts no man*; and therefore when it is said he moved David to do it, it must be explained by this here, that for wise and holy ends he permitted the Devil to do it. Here we trace this foul stream to its fountain. (1.) That Satan, the enemy of God and all good, should *stand up against Israel*, is not strange; it is what he aims at, to weaken the strength, diminish the numbers, and eclipse the glory of God's Israel, to whom he is Satan, a sworn adversary. But, (2.) That he should influence David, the man after God's own heart, to do an ill thing, may well be wondered at; one would think him one of those whom the wicked one toucheth not: no, even the best saints, till they come to heaven, must never think themselves out of the reach of Satan's temptations.

Now when Satan meant to do Israel a mischief, what course did he take? He did not *move God against them to destroy them*, as he did against Job, chap. ii. 3. but he provoked David, the best friend they had, to number them, and so to offend God, and set him against them. Note, 1. The Devil doth us more mischief by tempting us to sin against our God, than he doth by *accusing us before our God*. He destroys none but by their own hands. 2. The greatest spite he can do to the church of God, is to tempt the rulers of the church to pride; for none can conceive the fatal consequences of that sin in all, especially in church rulers. *Ye shall not be so*, Luke xxii. 26.

2. How passive the instrument was. Joab was the person employed, an active man in publick business; but to this he was perfectly forced, and did it with the greatest reluctancy imaginable.

(1.) He put in a remonstrance against it before he began it. No man more forward than he in any thing that really tended to the honour of the king, or the welfare of the kingdom, but in this matter he would gladly be excused; for, (1.) It was a needless thing, there was no occasion at all for it. God had promised to multiply them, and he needed not question the accomplishment of that promise; they were all his servants, and he needed not doubt of their loyalty and affection to him. Their number was as much his strength, as he could desire. (2.) It was a dangerous thing: In doing it he might be a cause of trespass to Israel, and might provoke God against them. This Joab apprehended, and yet David himself did not. The most learned in the laws of God, are not always the most quick-sighted in the application of those laws.

(2.) He was quite weary of it before he had done it; for *the king's word was abominable to Joab*, ver. 6. Time was, when whatever king David did *pleased all the people*, 2 Sam. iii. 36. But now there was a general disgust of these orders, which confirmed Joab in his dislike of them, so that though the produce of this muster, was really very great, yet he had no heart to perfect it, but left two tribes unnumbered, ver. 5, 6. two considerable ones, Levi and Benjamin; and, perhaps, was not very exact in numbring the rest, because he did not do it with any pleasure, which might be one occasion of the difference between the sums here, and 2 Sam. xxiv. 9.

7. ¶ And God was displeased with this thing, therefore he smote Israel. 8. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now



I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly. 9. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Gad, Davids seer, saying, 10. Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things, choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. 11. So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, choose thee 12. Either three years famine, or three months to be destroyed before thy foes (while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee) or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel: now therefore advise thy self, what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. 13. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD (for very great are his mercies) but let me not fall into the hand of man. 14. ¶ So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. 15. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough. stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 16. And David lift up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem: then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. 17. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbred? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my fathers house, but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

David is here under the rod for numbring the people, that rod of correction, which drives out the foolishness that is bound up in the heart, the foolishness of pride. Let us briefly observe,

1. How he was corrected: If God's dearest children do amiss, they must expect to smart for it.

(1.) He is given to understand, that God is displeased, and that is no small uneasiness to so good a man as David, ver. 7. God takes notice of, and is displeased with the sins of his people, and no sin more displeasing to him than pride of heart; nor is any thing more humbling, and grieving, and mortifying to a gracious soul, than to see itself under God's displeasure.

(2.) He is put to his choice, whether he will be punished by war, famine, or pestilence; for punished he must be, and by one of these. Thus for his further humiliation he is put into a strait, a great strait; and has the terror of all the three judgments impressed upon his mind, no doubt, to his great amazement, while he is considering which he shall choose.

(3.) He hears of seventy thousand of his subjects, who in a few hours were struck dead by the pestilence, ver. 14. He was proud of the multitude of his people, but divine justice took a course to make them fewer. Justly is that taken from us, weakened or embittered to us, which we are proud of. David must have the people numbred: Bring me the number of them, saith he, that I may know it; but now God numbers them after another manner, numbers them to the sword, Isa. lxxv. 12. And David had another number of them brought him, more to his confusion than that was to his satisfaction, viz. The number of the slain: A black bill of mortality, which is a draw-back to his muster-roll.

(4.) He sees the destroying angel, with his sword drawn against Jerusalem, ver. 16. This could not but be very terrible to him, as it is a visible indication of the anger of heaven, and threatened the utter destruction of that beloved city. Pestilences make the greatest devastations in the most populous places. The sight of an angel, though coming peaceably, and on a friendly errand, has made even mighty men to tremble; how dreadful then must this sight be, of an angel with a drawn sword in his hand, a flaming sword, like that of the cherubim, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. While we lie under the wrath of God, the holy angels are armed against us, though we see them not, as David did.

2. How he bore the correction.

(1.) He made a very penitent confession of his sin, and prayed earnestly for the pardon of it; ver. 8. Now he owns he had sinned, had sinned greatly, had done foolishly, very foolishly, begs that however he might be corrected for it, and the iniquity of it might be done away.

(2.) He accepted the punishment of his iniquity, let thy hand be on me and on my fathers house. I submit to the rod, only

let me be the sufferer, for I am the sinner, mine is the guilty head at which the sword should be pointed.

(3.) He cast himself upon the mercy of God, though he knew he was angry with him, and did not entertain any ill thoughts of him; however it be, *Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great*, ver. 13. Good men, even when God frowns upon them, think well of him; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*.

(4.) He expressed a very tender concern for the people, and it went to his heart to see them plagued for his transgression; *these sheep what have they done?*

18. ¶ Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and set up an altar unto the LORD, in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD. 20. And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. 21. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing-floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. 22. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price, that the plague may be stayed from the people. 23. And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt-offerings, and the threshing-instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat-offering, I give it all. 24. And king David said to Ornan, Nay, but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt-offerings without cost. 25. So David gave to Ornan for the place, six hundred shekels of gold by weight. 26. And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings, and called upon the LORD, and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offerings. 27. And the LORD commanded the angel, and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. 28. ¶ At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. 29. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt-offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. 30. But David could not go before it to enquire of God; for he was afraid, because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

We have here the controversy taken up, and upon David's repentance his peace made with God. *Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away*.

1. A stop was put to the progress of the execution, ver. 15. When David repented him of the sin, God repented him of the judgment, and ordered the destroying angel to *stay his hand*, and *sheath his sword*, ver. 27.

2. Direction was given to David to rear an altar in the threshing-floor of Ornan, ver. 18. The angel commanded the prophet Gad, to bring David this direction; the same angel that had in God's name carried on the war, is here forward to set on foot the treaty of peace; for angels do not desire the woful day. The angel could have given this order to David himself, but he chose to do it by his seer, that he might put an honour upon the prophetic office. Thus the revelation of Jesus Christ was notified by the angel to John, and by him to the churches. The commanding of David to build an altar, was a blessed token of reconciliation; for if God had been pleased to kill him, he would not have appointed, because he would not have accepted, a sacrifice at his hands.

David presently made a bargain with Ornan for the threshing-floor; for he would not serve God at other peoples charge. Ornan generously offered it him gratis, not only in complaisance to the king, but because he had himself seen the angel, ver. 20. which put him into such a fright, that he and his four sons hid themselves, as unable to bear the brightness of his glory, and afraid of his drawn sword. Under these apprehensions, he was willing to do any thing towards making the atonement. Those that are duly sensible of the terrors of the Lord, will do all they can in their places to promote religion, and all the methods of reconciliation for the turning away of God's wrath.



4. God testified his acceptance of David's offerings on this altar: He answered him from heaven by fire, ver. 26. To signify that God's anger was turned away from him; the fire that might justly have fastened upon the sinner, fastened upon the sacrifice, and consumed that; and upon this, the destroying sword was returned into its sheath. Thus Christ was made sin, and a curse for us, and it pleased the Lord to bruise him, that through him God might be to us not a consuming fire, but a reconciled father.

5. He continued to offer his sacrifices upon this altar. The brazen altar which Moses made was at Gibeon, ver. 29. and there all the sacrifices of Israel were offered: But David was so frightened with the sight of the sword of the angel, that he could not go thither, ver. 30. The business required haste, when the plague was begun. Aaron must go quickly, nay, he must run to make atonement, Numb. xvi. 46, 47. And the case here was no less urgent; so that David had not time to go to Gibeon: nor durst he leave the angel, with his sword drawn over Jerusalem, lest the fatal stroke should be given before he came back. And therefore God in tenderness to him, bid him build an altar in that place, dispensing with his own law concerning one altar, because of the present distress, and accepting the sacrifices offered on this new altar, which was not set up in any opposition to that, but in concurrence with it. The symbols of unity were not so much insisted on as unity itself. Nay, when the present distress was over, (as it would seem) David as long as he lived sacrificed there, though the altar at Gibeon was still kept up: For God had owned the sacrifices that were here offered, and had testified his acceptance of them, ver. 28. On those administrations where we have experienced the tokens of God's presence, and have found that he is with us of a truth, it is good to continue our attendance. Here God has graciously met me, and therefore I will still expect to meet with him.

## C H A P. XXII.

Out of the eater comes forth meat. It was upon occasion of that terrible judgment, inflicted on Israel for the sin of David, that God gave intimation of the setting up of another altar, and of the place where he would have the temple to be built, upon which David was excited with great vigour to make preparation for that great work; wherein, though he had long since designed it, it should seem he was of late grown remiss, till awakened by the alarm of that judgment. The tokens of God's favour he received, after those of his displeasure, (1.) Directed him to the place, ver. 1. (2.) Encouraged and quickened him to the work. 1. He set himself to prepare for the building, ver. 2—5. 2. He instructed Solomon, and gave him a charge concerning this work, ver. 6—16. 3. He commanded the princes to assist him in it, ver. 17—19. There is a great deal of difference between the frame of David's spirit in the beginning of the former chapter, and in the beginning of this. There, in the pride of his heart he was numbering the people; here, in his humility, preparing for the service of God. There corruption was uppermost, but the well of living water in the soul, though it may be muddied, will work itself clear again: grace here has recovered the upper hand.

1. **T**HEN David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel. 2. And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel, and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. 3. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails of the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; 4. Also cedar-trees in abundance: for the Zidonians, and they of Tyre brought much cedar-wood to David. 5. And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD, must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

Here is, 1. The place fixed for the building of the temple, ver. 1. Then David said, by inspiration of God, and as a declaration of his mind, This is the house of the Lord God. If a temple must be built for God, it is fit it be left to him to choose the ground, for all the earth is his; and this is the ground he makes choice of; ground that had pertained to a Jebusite, and, perhaps, there was not a spot of ground besides, in or about Jerusalem, that did so; a happy presage of the setting up of the gospel temple among the Gentiles. See Acts xv. 16, 17. The ground was a threshing-floor; for the church of the living God is his floor, his threshing, and the corn of his floor, Isa. xxi. 10.

Christ's fan is in his hand thoroughly to purge his floor. This is to be the house, because this is the altar, the temple was built for the sake of the altar: There were altars long before there were temples.

2. Preparation made for that building. David must not build it, but he would do all he could towards it; he prepared abundantly before his death, ver. 5. It intimates that the consideration of his age and growing infirmities, which shewed him his death approaching, quickened him towards his latter end, to be very diligent in making this preparation. What our hand finds to do for God, and our souls, and our generation, let us do it with all our might, before our death, because after death there is no device nor working.

Now we are here told,

1. What induced him to make such preparation. Two things he considered. (1.) That Solomon was young and tender, and not likely to apply himself with any great vigour to this business at first, so that unless he found the wheels set a going, he would be in danger of losing a great deal of time at first, the rather, because being young, he would be tempted to put it off; whereas, if he found the materials got ready to his hand, the most difficult part of the work would be over, and it would excite and encourage him to go about it in the beginning of his reign. Note, Those that are aged and experienced, should consider those that are young and tender, provide them what help they can, that they may make the work of God as easy to them as possible. (2.) That the House must be exceeding magnificent, very stately and sumptuous, strong and beautiful, every thing about it the best in its kind: And good reason, because it was intended for the honour of the great God, the Lord of the whole earth, and was to be a type of Christ, in whom all fulness dwells, and in whom are hid all treasures. Men were then to be taught by sensible methods, and the grandeur of the house, would help to affect the worshippers with a holy awe and reverence of God, and would invite strangers to come see it, as the wonder of the world, who thereby would be brought acquainted with the true God, therefore it is here designed to be of fame and of glory throughout all countries. David foretold this good effect of its being magnificent, Psal. lxxviii. 29. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto thee.

2. What preparation he made: In general he prepared abundantly, as we shall find afterwards; cedar and stones, iron and brass are here instanced in, ver. 2, 3, 4. Cedar he had from the Tyrians and Zidonians; The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, Psal. xlv. 12. He also got workmen together, the strangers that were in the land of Israel; some think, because they were generally better artists, and more ingenious in manual operations than the Israelites; or rather, because he would not employ the free-born Israelites in any thing that looked mean and servile. They were delivered from the bondage of making bricks in Egypt, and must not return to hew stones. These strangers were proselytes to the Jewish religion, who, though not enslaved, yet were not of equal dignity with Israelites.

6. ¶ Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build him an house for the LORD God of Israel. 7. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: 8. But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. 9. Behold, a son shall be born to thee who shall be a man of rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about him: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. 10. He shall build an house for my name, and he shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever. 11. Now, my son, the LORD be with thee, and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee. 12. Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. 13. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong and of good courage, dread not, nor be dismayed. 14. Now behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass, and iron, without weight (for it is in abundance) timber also and stone have I prepared, and thou mayest add thereto.

15. More-



15. Moreover, *there are* workmen with thee in abundance; hewers, and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work. 16. Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, *there is* no number. Arise, *therefore* and be doing; and the LORD be with thee.

Though Solomon was young and tender, he was capable of receiving instructions concerning the work, for which he was designed, which his father here gives him. When David came to the throne he had many things to do, for the foundations were all out of course; but Solomon had only one thing in charge, and that was to build a house for the Lord God of Israel, ver. 6. Now,

1. He tells him why he did not do it himself. It was in his mind to do it, ver. 7. but God forbid him, because *he had shed much blood*, ver. 8. Some think it refers to the blood of Uriah, which fastened such a reproach upon him, as rendered him unworthy the honour of building the temple; but that honour was forbidden him before he had shed that blood, therefore it must be meant, as it is here explained, of the blood he shed in his wars, for he had been a man of war from his youth, which, though shed very justly and honourably, and in the service of God, and Israel, yet made him unfit to be employed in this service, or rather less fit than another that had never been called to such bloody work. God, by assigning this as the reason of laying David aside from this work, shewed how precious human life is to him, and intended a type of him who should build the gospel temple, not by *destroying mens lives*, but *saving them*, Luke ix. 56.

2. He gives him the reason why he imposed this task upon him. (1.) Because God had designed him for it, nominated him as the man that must do it; *A son shall be born to thee that shall be called Solomon, and he shall build a house for my name*, ver. 9, 10. Nothing is more powerful to engage us to, and encourage us in any service for God, than to know that hereunto we are appointed. (2.) Because he would have leisure and opportunity to do it. He should be a man of rest, and therefore should not have his time, or thoughts, or wealth diverted from this business. He should have rest from his enemies abroad, none of them should invade or threaten him, or give him provocation; and he should have peace and quietness at home, and therefore let him build the house. Note, Where God gives rest he expects work. (3.) Because God had promised to establish his kingdom. Let this encourage him to honour God, that God had honour in store for him; let him build up God's house, and God will build up his throne. Note, God's gracious promises should quicken and invigorate our religious service.

3. He delivers him an account of the vast preparations he had made for this building, ver. 14. not in a way of pride, and vain-glory; no, he speaks of it as a poor thing, *I have in my poverty prepared*, marg. But as an encouragement to Solomon to engage cheerfully in the work, that he began with a good bottom. The treasure here mentioned of one hundred thousand talents of gold, and ten hundred thousand talents of silver amounts to such an incredible deal, that most interpreters either allow an error in the copy, or think the talent here signifies no more but a plate or piece; ingots we call them. I am apt to think, a certain number is here put for an uncertain, because it is said, ver. 16. that of the gold and silver as well as of the brass and iron there was no number, and that David here includes all the dedicated things, chap. xviii. 11. which he designed for the house of the Lord, i. e. not only for the building of it, but for the treasures of it, and putting all together, it might come pretty near what is here spoken of. Hundreds and thousands are numbers we often use to express that which is very much, when yet we would not be understood strictly.

4. He chargeth him to keep God's commandments, and to take heed to his duty in every thing, ver. 13. He must not think by building the temple to purchase a dispensation to sin; no, but on the contrary, his doing that would not be accepted nor accounted of, if he did not take heed to fulfil the statutes which the Lord charged Moses with, ver. 13. Though he was to be king of Israel, he must always remember that he was a subject to the God of Israel.

5. He encourageth him to go about this great work, and to go on in it, ver. 13. *Be strong and of good courage*; though it is a vast undertaking, thou needest not fear coming under the reproach of the foolish builder, that began to build, and was not able to finish; it is God's work, and it shall come to perfection; *dread not, nor be dismayed*. In our spiritual work as well as in our spiritual warfare, we have need of courage and resolution.

6. He quickens him not to rest in the preparations he had made, but to add thereto, ver. 14. Those that enter into the labours of others, and build upon their advantages, must still be improving.

Lastly, He prays for him, *The Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel*, ver. 12.

N<sup>o</sup>. XXX.

Whatever charge we have, if we see God giving us the charge, and calling us to it, we may hope he will give us wisdom for the discharge of it. Perhaps Solomon had an eye to this prayer for him, in that prayer of his for himself, Lord, *give me a wise and understanding heart*. He concludes, ver. 16. *up and be doing, and the Lord be with thee*. Hope of God's presence must not slacken our endeavour; though the Lord be with us, we must rise and be doing, which, if we do, we have reason to believe he is, and will be with us. Work out your salvation; and God will work in you.

17. ¶ David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, 18. *Is not the LORD your God with you?* and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand, and the land is subdued before the Lord; and before his people. 19. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God, arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.

David here engageth the princes of Israel to assist Solomon in the great work he had to do, and every one to lend him a hand towards the carrying of it on. They that are in the throne cannot do the good they would, unless those about the throne set in with them. David would therefore have the princes to advise Solomon, and quicken him, and make the work as easy to him as they could, by promoting it every one in his place.

1. He shews them what obligations they lay under to be zealous in this matter, in gratitude to God for the great things he had done for them; he had given them victory, and rest, and a good land for an inheritance, ver. 18. The more God has done for us, the more we should study to do for him.

2. He presseth that upon them which would make them zealous in it, ver. 19. *Set your heart and soul to seek God*, place your happiness in his favour, and keep your eye upon his glory; seek him as your chief good and highest end, and this *with your heart and soul*; make religion your choice and business, and then you will stick at no pains or cost to promote the building of his sanctuary. Let but the heart be sincerely engaged for God, and the head and hand, the estate and interest, and all will be cheerfully employed for him.

## CHAP. XXIII.

David having given charge concerning the building of the temple, in this and the following chapters settles the method of the temple service, and puts into order the offices and officers of it. In the late irregular times, and during the wars in the beginning of his reign, we may suppose, though the Levitical ordinances were kept up, yet not in that order, nor with that beauty and exactness that was desirable: Now David being a prophet as well as a prince, by divine warrant and direction set in order the things that were wanting. In this chapter, (1.) He declared Solomon to be his successor, ver. 1. (2.) He numbred the Levites, and appointed them to their respective offices, ver. 2—5. (3.) He took an account of the several families of the Levites, ver. 6—23. (4.) He made a new reckoning of them from twenty years old, and appointed them their work, ver. 24—32. And in this he prepared for the temple as truly as when he laid up gold and silver for it, for the place is of small account in comparison with the work.

1. **S**O when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. 2. ¶ And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites. Now the Levites were numbred from the age of thirty and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. 4. Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD: and six thousand were officers and judges. 5. Moreover, four thousand were porters, and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made (said David) to praise therewith. 6. And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi, namely, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 7. ¶ Of the Gershonites were Laadan and Shimei. 8. The sons of Laadan, the chief was Jehiel, and Zetham, and Joel, three. 9. The sons of Shimei, Shelomith, and Haziel, and Haran, three. These were the chief of the fathers of Laadan. 10. And the sons of Shimei were, Jahath, Zina, and Jeush, and Beriath. These four were the sons of Shimei. 11. And



Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second: but Jeush and Beriah had not many sons: therefore they were in one reckoning, according to *their* fathers house. 12. ¶ The sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. 13. The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever. 14. Now concerning Moses the man of God, his sons were named of the tribe of Levi. 15. The sons of Moses were, Gershom and Eliezer. 16. Of the sons of Gershom, Shebuel was the chief. 17. And the sons of Eliezer were Rehabiah the chief. And Eliezer had none other sons; but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. 18. Of the sons of Izhar; Shelomith the chief. 19. Of the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jehaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. 20. Of the sons of Uzziel; Micah the first, and Jesiah the second. 21. ¶ The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi: the sons of Mahli; Eleazar and Kish: 22. And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but daughters: and their brethren the sons of Kish took them. 23. The sons of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth, three.

Here is, 1. The crown entailed, according to the divine appointment, *ver.* 1. David made Solomon king, not to reign with him, or reign under him, but only to reign after him. This he did, (1.) When he was old and full of days; he was but seventy years old when he died, and yet he was full of days, *satur diem*, satisfied with living in this world. When he found himself going off, he took care for the kingdom when he was gone, and pleased himself with the hopeful prospects of a happy settlement, both in church and state. (2.) He did it in parliament, in a solemn assembly of all the princes of Israel, which made Adonijah's attempt to break in upon Solomon's title, and set it aside, notwithstanding this publick recognition and establishment of it, the more impudent, impious, and ridiculous. Note, The settling and securing of the crown in the interests of the temple, is a great blessing to a people, and a great satisfaction to those that are themselves leaving the stage.

2. The Levites numbred, according to the rule in Moses's time, from thirty years old to fifty, *Numb.* iv. 2, 3. Their number in Moses's time, by this rule, was eight thousand five hundred and eighty, *Numb.* iv. 47, 48. but now it was increased above four-fold, much more in proportion than the rest of the tribes, for the serviceable men of Levi's tribe, were now thirty eight thousand; unless we suppose, that here those were reckoned who were above fifty, which were not there. Joab had not numbred the Levites, *chap.* xxi. 6. but David now did, not in pride, but for a good purpose, and then he needed not fear wrath for it.

3. The Levites distributed to their respective posts, *ver.* 4, 5. that every hand might be employed; for of all men, an idle Levite makes a very ill figure, and that every part of the work might be carefully done. Now, (1.) It was for the honour of God, that so great a number of servants attended his house, and the business of it; much of the state of great men consists in the greatness of their retinue; when God kept house in Israel, see what a great household he had, and all well fed, and well taught. But what were these to the attendants of his throne above, an innumerable company of angels? (2.) It was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them, such a considerable body of men, who were obliged by their office to promote and keep up religion among them. If the worship of God go to decay in Israel, let it not be said, it was for want of due provision for the support of it, but that they who should have done it, were careless and false.

The work assigned the Levites was four-fold. (1.) Some, and indeed far the greater number, were to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. Twenty four thousand, almost two thirds were appointed for this service, to attend the priests in killing the sacrifices; slaying them; washing them; cutting them up; burning them, to have the meat-offering and drink-offering ready, to carry out dirt, and keep all the vessels and utensils of the temple clean, and every thing in its place, that the service might be performed both with expedition, and with exactness. These served a thousand a week, and so went round in twenty four courses. Perhaps while the temple was in building, some of these were employed to set forward that work, to assist the builders, at least to quicken them, and keep good order among them, and the decorum which became temple work. (2.) Others were officers and judges, not in the affairs of the temple, and in controversies that arose there, for there we may suppose the priests presided. But in the country, they were magistrates to give the laws of God in charge, to resolve diffi-

culties, and to determine controversies that arose upon them. Of these there were four thousand in the several parts of the kingdom, that assisted the princes and elders of every tribe, in the administration of justice. (3.) Others were porters to guard all the avenues of the house of God, to examine them that desired entrance, and to resist those that would force an entrance. These were the life guards of the temple, and probably were armed accordingly. (4.) Others were singers, and players on instruments, whose business it was to keep up that part of the service; this was a new erected office.

4. The Levites mustered, and disposed of into their respective families and kindreds, that an account of them might the better be kept, and those that neglected their duty might the easier be discovered by calling over the roll, and obliged them to answer to their names, which each family might do for itself. When those of the same family were employed together, it would engage them to love and assist one another. When Christ sent forth his disciples, two and two, those that were brethren he put together. Two families were here joined in one, *ver.* 11. because they had not many sons. Those that are weak and little separately, may be put together and make a figure.

That which is most observable in this account of the families of the Levites is, that the posterity of Moses (that great man) stood upon the level with common Levites, and had no dignities or privileges at all peculiar to them; while the posterity of Aaron were advanced to the priest's office, to *sanctify the most holy things*, *ver.* 13. It is said indeed of the grandson of Moses, Rehabiah, that *his sons were highly multiplied*, *ver.* 17. marg. When God proposed to him, that if he would let fall his intercession for Israel, he would make of him a great nation, he generously refused it, in recompence of which, his family is here greatly increased, and makes up in number, what it wants in figure, in the tribe of Levi. Now, (1.) The levelling of Moses's family with the rest, is an evidence of his self-denial: Such an interest had he both with God and man, that if he had aimed to raise his own family, to dignify and enrich that, he might have easily have done it, but he was no self-seeking man, and so it appeared, when he left to his children no marks of distinction; which was a sign he had the spirit of God, and not the spirit of the world. (2.) The elevation of Aaron's family above the rest, was a recompence of his self-denial. When Moses (his younger brother) was made a god to Pharaoh, and he only his prophet or spokesman, to observe his orders, and do as he was bidden. Aaron never disputed it, nor insisted upon his seniority, but readily took the inferior post God put him in, submitted to Moses, and upon occasion, called him his lord; and because he thus submitted himself in his own person to his junior, in compliance with the will of God, God highly exalted his family, even above that of Moses himself. Those that are content to stoop, are in the fairest way to rise. Before honour is humility.

24. ¶ These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; *even* the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward. 25. For David said, The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever; 26. And also unto the Levites: they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof. 27. For by the last words of David, the Levites were numbred from twenty years old and above. 28. Because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron, for the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God; 29. Both for the shew-bread, and for the fine flour for meat-offering, and for the unleavened cakes, and for *that which is baked in the pan*, and for that which is fried, and for all manner of measure and size: 30. And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even: 31. And to offer all burnt-sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new-moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them continually before the LORD: 32. And that they should keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the holy place, and the charge of the sons of Aaron their brethren, in the service of the house of the LORD.

Here is, 1. An alteration made in the computation of the effective men of the Levites, that whereas in Moses's time they were not listed, nor taken into service till they were thirty years old,



old, nor admitted as probationers till twenty five, *Numb. viii. 24.* David ordered, by direction from God, that they should be numbred *for the service of the house of the Lord*, from the age of twenty years and upwards, *ver. 24.* This order he confirmed by his last words, *ver. 27.* when he put his last hand to the draught of this establishment, he expressly appointed this to be done for ever after; yet not he, but the Lord. (1.) Perhaps the young Levites not having any work appointed them till twenty five years old, had many of them got a habit of idleness, or grew addicted to their pleasures, which proved both a blemish to their reputation, and a hindrance to their usefulness afterwards, to prevent which inconvenience they are set to work, and brought under discipline at twenty years old. Those that will be eminent, must learn to take care, and take pains betimes. 2. When the work of the Levites was to carry burthens, heavy burthens, the tabernacle and furniture of it, God would not call any to it till they were come to their full strength; for he considers our frame, and in service as well as sufferings, will lay no more upon us than we are able to bear: But now God had given rest to his people, and made Jerusalem his dwelling-place for ever, so that there was no more occasion to carry the tabernacle, and the vessels thereof, the service was much easier, and what would not over-work them, nor over-load them, if they entred upon it at twenty years old. (3.) Now the people of Israel were multiplied, and there was a more general resort to Jerusalem, and would be when the temple was built, than had ever been to Shiloh, or Nob, or Gibeon, it was requisite there should be more hands employed in the temple-service, that every Israelite that brought an offering might find a Levite ready to assist him. When more work is to be done, it is pity but there should be more workmen fetched in for the doing of it. When the harvest is plenteous, why should the labourers be few?

2. A further account of the Levites work. What the work of the priests was we are told, *ver. 13.* To sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the Lord, and to bless in his name; that work the Levites were not to meddle with, and yet they had work enough, and good work, according to that to which they were appointed, *ver. 4, 5.* (1.) Those of them that were to set forward the work of the house of God, *ver. 4.* were therein to wait on the sons of Aaron, *ver. 28.* were to do the drudgery work (if any work for God, is to be called drudgery) of the house of God, to keep the courts and chambers clean, set things in their places, and have them ready when there was occasion to use them. They were to prepare the shew-bread which the priests were to set on the table, to provide the flour and cakes for the meat-offerings, that the priests might have every thing ready to their hands. (2.) Those of them that were judges and officers, particularly had an eye upon all measure and size, *ver. 29.* The standards of all weights and measures were kept in the sanctuary, and the Levites had the care of them to see that they were exact, and to try other weights and measures by them when they were appealed to. (3.) The work of the singers was to thank and praise the Lord, *ver. 30.* at the offering of the morning and evening sacrifices, and other oblations on the sabbaths, new moons, &c. *ver. 31.* Moses appointed that they should blow with trumpets over their burnt-offerings, and other sacrifices, and on their solemn days, *Numb. x. 9.* The sound of which was awful, and might be affecting to the worshippers, but was not articulate, nor such a reasonable service as this which David appointed, of singing psalms on those occasions. As the Jewish church grew up from its infancy, it grew more and more intelligent in its devotions, till it came at length in the gospel to put away childish things, *Gal. iv. 3, 9.* (4.) The work of the porters (*ver. 5.*) was to keep the charge of the tabernacle, and of the holy place, that none might come nigh but such as were allowed, and those no nearer than was allowed them, *ver. 32.* They were likewise to keep the charge of the sons of Aaron, to be at their beck, and go on their errands, who yet are called their brethren, to be a memorandum to the priests, that though they were advanced to a high station, yet they were hewn out of the same rock with common Levites, and therefore must not lord it over them, but in all instances treat them as brethren.

## C H A P. XXIV.

This chapter gives us a more particular account of the distribution of the priests and Levites into their respective classes, for the more regular discharge of their offices, according to their families. (1.) Of the priests, *ver. 1—19.* (2.) Of the Levites, *ver. 20—31.*

1. **N**OW these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron: The sons of Aaron; Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 2. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priests office. 3. And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, accord-

ing to their offices in their service. 4. And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar, than of the sons of Ithamar; and thus were they divided: Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers. 5. Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar. 6. And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, one of the Levites, wrote them before the king and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar. 7. Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, 8. The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, 9. The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, 10. The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, 11. The ninth to Jeshuah, the tenth to Shecaniah, 12. The eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, 13. The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, 14. The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, 15. The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphen, 16. The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, 17. The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul, 18. The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah. 19. These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

The particular account of these establishments is of little use to us now; but when Ezra published it, it was of great use to direct their church-affairs after their return from captivity into the old channel again. The title of this record we have, *ver. 1.* These are the divisions of the sons of Aaron; not by which they divided one from another, or were at variance one with another; it is pity there should ever be any such divisions among the sons of Israel, but especially among the sons of Aaron: but the distributions of them in order to the dividing of their work among themselves, it was a division which God made, and was made for him.

1. This distribution was made for the more regular discharge of their office. God was, and still is the God of order, and not of confusion: particularly in the things of his worship. Number without order is but a clog, and an occasion of tumult; but when every one hath, and knows, and keeps his place and work, the more the better. In the mystical body every member has its use, for the good of the whole, *Rom. xii. 4, 5. 1 Cor. xii. 12.*

2. It was made by lot, that the disposal thereof might be of the Lord, and so all quarrels and contentions might be prevented, and no man could be charged with partiality, nor could any say they had wrong done them: as God is the God of order, so he is the God of peace. Solomon saith of the lot, that it causeth contention to cease.

3. The lot was cast publicly, and with great solemnity, in the presence of the king, princes, and priests, that there might be no room for any fraudulent practices, or the suspicion of them. The lot is an appeal to God, and ought to be managed with an agreeable reverence and sincerity. Matthias was chosen to the apostleship by lot with prayer, *Acts i. 24.* And I know not but it might be still used in faith, in parallel cases, as an instituted ordinance. We have here the name of the publick notary that was employed in writing the names, and drawing the lots, *ver. 6.* Shemaiah one of the Levites.

4. What those priests were chosen to was, to preside in the affairs of the sanctuary, *ver. 5.* in their several courses and turns: that which was to be determined by the lot, was only the precedence; not who should serve, for they chose all the chief men; but who should serve first, and who next, that every one might know his course, and attend in it. The twenty four chief men of the priests, were sixteen of the house of Eleazar, and eight of Ithamar; for the house of Ithamar might well be supposed to dwindle since the sentence passed on the family of Eli, who was of that house. The method of drawing the lots is intimated, *ver. 6.* one chief household being taken for Eleazar, and one for Ithamar; the sixteen chief names of Eleazar were put in one urn, the eight for Ithamar in another, and they drew out of them alternately, as long as those for Ithamar lasted, and then out of those only for Eleazar; or two for Eleazar, and then one for Ithamar; throughout.



5. Among these twenty four courses, the eighth is that of Abijah or Abia, *ver. 10.* which is mentioned *Luke i. 5.* as the course which Zechariah was of, the father of John Baptist; by which it appears that these courses which David now settled, though interrupted perhaps in the bad reigns, and long broken off by the captivity, yet continued in succession till the destruction of the second temple by the Romans: and each course was called by the name of him in whom it was first founded, as the high priest is here called Aaron, *ver. 19.* because succeeding in his dignity and power, though we read not of any of them that bore that name; whoever was high priest must be revered and observed by the inferior priests as their father, as Aaron their father: Christ is high priest over the house of God, to whom all believers, being made priests, are to be in subjection.

20. ¶ And the rest of the sons of Levi *were these*: Of the sons of Amram; Shubael: of the sons of Shubael; Jehdeiah. 21. Concerning Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, the first *was* Isshiah. 22. Of the Izharites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath. 23. And the sons of Hebron; Jeriah *the first*, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. 24. Of the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir. 25. The brother of Michah *was* Isshiah: of the sons of Isshiah; Zechariah. 26. The sons of Merari *were*, Mahli and Mushi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno. 27. ¶ The sons of Merari by Jaaziah; Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri. 28. Of Mahli *came* Eleazar, who had no sons. 29. Concerning Kish: the son of Kish *was* Jerahmeel. 30. The sons of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth. *These were* the sons of the Levites, after the house of their fathers. 31. *These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron, in the presence of David the king, and Zadok and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers, over against their younger brethren.*

The Levites here named were most of them mentioned before, *chap. xxiii. 16, &c.* They were of those who were to attend the priests in the service of the house of God. But are here mentioned again, as heads of the twenty four courses of Levites (and about so many are here named) who were to attend the twenty four courses of the priests; they are therefore said to *cast lots over against their brethren* (so they are called, not their lords) *the sons of Aaron*, who were not to lord it over God's clergy, as the original word is, *1 Pet. v. 3.* And that the whole disposal of the affair might be of the Lord, the principal fathers cast lots over against their younger brethren, *i. e.* those that were of the elder house came upon the level with those of the younger families, and took their place, not by seniority, but as God by the lot directed. Note, In Christ no difference is made between bond and free, elder and younger. The younger brethren, if they be faithful and sincere, shall be no less acceptable to Christ than the principal fathers.

## C H A P. XXV.

*David having settled the courses of those Levites that were to attend the priests in their ministrations, proceeds in this chapter to put those into a method that were appointed to be singers and musicians in the temple. Here is, (1.) The persons that were to be employed, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, ver. 1. Their sons, ver. 2—6. and other artists, ver. 7. (2.) The order in which they were to attend determined by lot, ver. 8—31.*

1. **M**oreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen, according to their service, was: 2. Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Afarelah, the sons of Asaph, under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king. 3. Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD. 4. Of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattithiah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathath, Giddalti, and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth: 5. All

*these were* the sons of Heman the kings seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn: And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. 6. All these were under the hands of their father, for song in the house of the LORD with cymbals, psalteries, and harps; for the service of the house of God, according to the kings order, to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman. 7. So the number of them, with their brethren, that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, *even* all that were cunning, *was* two hundred fourscore and eight.

Observe, 1. Singing the praises of God is here called *prophesying*, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* not that all those who were employed in this service were honoured with the visions of God, or could foretell things to come. Heman indeed, is said to be the *king's seer in the words of God*, *ver. 5.* but the psalms they sung were composed by prophets, and many of them were prophetic, and the edification of the church was intended in it, as well as the glory of God. In Samuel's time, singing the praises of God went by the name of prophesying, *1 Sam. x. 5. — xix. 20.* and perhaps that is intended in what St. Paul calls prophesying, *1 Cor. xi. 4. — xiv. 24.*

2. This is here called a service, and the persons employed in it workmen, *ver. 1.* Not but that it is the greatest liberty and pleasure to be employed in praising God; what is heaven but that? But it intimates, that it is our duty to make a business of it, and stir up all that is within us to it, and that in our present state of corruption and infirmity, it will not be done as it should be done without labour and struggle; we must take pains with our hearts to bring them, and keep them to this work, and to engage all that is within us.

3. Here were, in compliance with the temper of that dispensation, a great variety of musical instruments used, *harps, psalteries, cymbals*, *ver. 1, 6.* and here was one that *lifted up the horn*, *ver. 5. i. e.* used wind-musick. The bringing of such comforts of musick into the worship of God now, is what none pretend to. But those that use such comforts for their own entertainment, should see themselves obliged to preserve them always very innocent from any thing that savours of immorality or profaneness, by this consideration, that time was when they were sacred, and then they were justly condemned, who brought them even into common use, *Amos vi. 5. They invented to themselves instruments of musick like David.*

4. The glory and honour of God was principally intended in all this temple-musick, whether vocal or instrumental: It was to *give thanks, and praise the Lord*, that they were employed, *ver. 3.* It was *in the songs of the Lord that they were instructed*, *ver. 7. i. e.* for songs in the house of the Lord, *ver. 6.* This agrees with the intention of the perpetuating of psalmody in the gospel-church, which is, to *make melody with the heart*, in conjunction with the voice, *unto the Lord*, *Ephes. v. 19.*

5. The order of the king is likewise taken notice of, *ver. 2.* and again, *ver. 6.* In those matters indeed, David acted as a prophet; but his taking care for the due and regular observance of divine institutions, both ancient and modern, is an example to all in authority to use their power for the promoting of religion, and the enforcing of the laws of Christ. Let them thus be *ministers of God for good.*

6. The fathers presided in this service, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, *ver. 1.* and the children were *under the hands of their father*, *ver. 2, 3, 6.* This gives a good example to parents to train up their children, and indeed to all seniors to instruct their juniors in the service of God, and particularly in praising of him, than which there is no part of our work more necessary, nor more worthy to be transmitted to the succeeding generations. It gives also an example to the younger to *submit themselves to the elder*, whose experience and observation fits them for conduct; and, as far as may be, to do what they do *under their hand.* It is probable, Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun were bred up under Samuel, and had their education in the schools of the prophets, which he was the founder and president of; then they were pupils, now they came to be masters: those that would be eminent must begin early, and take time to prepare themselves: This good work of singing God's praises Samuel revived, and set on foot, but lived not to see it brought to this perfection it appears in here. Solomon perfects what David began, so David perfects what Samuel began. Let each in their day do what they can for God and his church, though they cannot carry it so far as they would; when they are gone, God can out of stones raise up others, who shall build upon their foundation, and bring forth the top stone.

7. There were others also, beside the sons of these three great men, who are called their brethren (probably, because they had been wont to join with them in their private comforts) who were *instructed in the songs of the Lord*, and were cunning or well-skilled therein, *ver. 7.* They were all Levites, and were in number two hundred eighty and eight. Now, (1.) These were a good number, and a competent number to keep up the service



in the house of God; for they were all skilful in the work to which they were called. When David the king was so much addicted to divine poetry and music, many others, all that had a genius for it, applied their studies and endeavours that way. Those do religion a great deal of good service, that bring the exercises of devotion into reputation. (2.) Yet these were but a small number in comparison with the four thousand, whom David appointed thus to *praise the Lord*, chap. xxiii. 5. Where were all the rest, when only two hundred eighty eight, and those but by twelve in a course, were *separated to this service*? It is probable, all the rest were divided into as many courses, and were to follow, as these led. Or, perhaps, these were for *sing in the house of the Lord*; ver. 6. with whom any that worshipped in the courts of that house might join, and the rest were disposed of all the kingdom over, to preside in the country congregations, in this good work; for though the sacrifices instituted by the hand of Moses, might be offered but at one place, the psalms penned by David might be sung every where, 1 Tim. ii. 8.

8. ¶ And they cast lots, ward against ward, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar. 9. Now the first lot came forth for Afaph to Joseph, the second to Gedaliah, who with his brethren and sons were twelve: 10. The third to Zaccur, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 11. The fourth to Izri, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 12. The fifth to Nethaniah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 13. The sixth to Bukkiah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 14. The seventh to Jesharelah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 15. The eighth to Jeshaiiah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 16. The ninth to Mattaniah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 17. The tenth to Shimei, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 18. The eleventh to Azareel, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 19. The twelfth to Hashabiah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 20. The thirteenth to Shubael, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 21. The fourteenth to Mattithiah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 22. The fifteenth to Jeremoth, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 23. The sixteenth to Hananiah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 24. The seventeenth to Joshbekashah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 25. The eighteenth to Hanani, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 26. The nineteenth to Mallothi, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 27. The twentieth to Eliathah, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 28. The one and twentieth to Hothir, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 29. The two and twentieth to Giddalti, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 30. The three and twentieth to Mahazioti, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve: 31. The four and twentieth to Romamti-ezer, *he*, his sons and his brethren were twelve:

Twenty four persons were named in the foregoing paragraph, as sons of those three great men, Afaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. Ethan was the third, chap. vi. 44. but it is likely he was dead before the establishment was perfected, and Jeduthun came in his room. Of these three providence so ordered it that Afaph had four sons, Jeduthun six, and Heman fourteen, in all twenty four, which were named; ver. 2, 3, 4. who were all qualified for the service, and called to it. But the question was, in what order they must serve, and that was determined by lot, to prevent strife for precedency; a sin which most easily besets many, that otherwise are good people.

1. The lot was thrown impartially. They were placed in twenty four companies, twelve in a company, in two rows, twelve companies in a row, and so they cast lots, *ward against ward*, putting them all upon a level; small and great, teacher and scholar; they did not go according to their age, or according to their standing, or the degrees they had taken in the music schools; but it was referred to God; ver. 8. small and great, teachers and scholars stand alike before God, who goes not according to our rules of distinction and precedency. See Matt. xx. 23.

2. God determined it as he pleased, probably with regard to the personal merits of the persons, which are much more considerable than seniority of age, or priority of birth. Let us compare them with the preceding catalogue, and we shall find that, (1.) Joseph was the second son of Afaph. (2.) Gedaliah eldest son of Jeduthun. (3.) Zaccur the eldest of Afaph. (4.) Izri second of Jeduthun. (5.) Nethaniah third of Afaph. (6.) Bukkiah eldest of Heman. (7.) Jesharelah youngest of Afaph. (8.)

Jeshaiiah third of Jeduthun. (9.) Mattaniah third of Heman. (10.) Shimei youngest of Jeduthun. (11.) Azareel third of Heman. (12.) Hashabiah fourth of Jeduthun. (13.) Shubael fourth of Heman. (14.) Mattithiah fifth of Jeduthun. (15.) Jeremoth fifth of Heman. (16.) Hananiah sixth of Heman. (17.) Joshbekashah eleventh of Heman. (18.) Hanani seventh of Heman. (19.) Mallothi twelfth of Heman. (20.) Eliathah eighth. (21.) Hothir the eleventh. (22.) Giddalti the ninth. (23.) Mahazioti the fourteenth. And lastly, Romamti-ezer the tenth of Heman. See how God increased some hands; and preferred the younger before the elder.

3. Each of these had in their chorus the number of twelve; called, *their sons and their brethren*; because they observed them as sons, and concurred with them as brethren. Probably twelve, some for the voice, and others for the instrument, made up the concert. Let us learn with one mind, and one mouth to glorify God, and that will be the best concert.

## C H A P. XXVI.

*We have here a further account of the business of the Levites; that tribe had made but a very small figure all the time of the judges, till Eli and Samuel appeared eminent of that tribe. But when David revived religion, the Levites were of all men in the greatest reputation; and happy it was they had Levites that were men of sense, fit to support the honour of their tribe. We have here an account, (1.) Of the Levites that were appointed to be porters, ver. 1—19. (2.) Of those that were appointed to be treasurers and store-keepers, ver. 20—28. (3.) Of those that were officers and judges in the country, and were intrusted with the administration of publick affairs, ver. 29—32.*

1. **C**ONCERNING the divisions of the porters: Of the Korhites was Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Afaph. 2. And the sons of Meshelemiah, were Zechariah, the first-born, Jediel the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, 3. Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Elioenai the seventh, 4. Moreover, the sons of Obed-edom were Shemaiah the first-born; Jehozabad the second; Joah the third, and Sacar the fourth; and Nethaneel the fifth, 5. Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth: for God blessed him. 6. Also unto Shemaiah his son were sons born, that ruled throughout the house of their father: for they were mighty men of valour. 7. The sons of Shemaiah; Othni, and Rephael, and Obed, Elzabad, whose brethren were strong men; Elihu and Semachiah. 8. All these of the sons of Obed-edom: they and their brethren, able men for strength for the service, were threescore and two of Obed-edom. 9. And Meshelemiah had sons and brethren, strong men, eighteen. 10. Also Hofah of the children of Merari had sons; Simri the chief (for though he was not the first-born, yet his father made him the chief) 11. Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all the sons and brethren of Hofah were thirteen. 12. Among these were the divisions of the porters, even among the chief men, *bearing* wards one against another, to minister in the house of the LORD. 13. ¶ And they cast lots, as well the small as the great, according to the house of their fathers for every gate. 14. And the lot eastward fell to Shelemiah; then for Zechariah his son (a wise counsellor) they cast lots, and his lot came out northward. 15. To Obed-edom southward, and to his sons, the house of Asuppim. 16. To Shuppim and Hofah, the lot came forth westward, with the gate Shallecheth, by the causeway of the going up, ward against ward. 17. Eastward were six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day; and toward Asuppim two and two: 18. At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar. 19. These are the divisions of the porters among the sons of Kore; and among the sons of Merari.

Observe 1. There were porters appointed to attend the temple, who guarded all the avenues that led to it, opened and shut all the outer-gates, and attended at them, not only for state but for service, to direct and instruct those that were going to worship in the courts of the sanctuary, in the decorum they were to observe; to encourage those that were timorous, to send back the strangers and unclean, and to guard against thieves, and others that were enemies to the house of God. In allusion to this office, ministers are said to have the keys of the kingdom of



of heaven committed to them, *Matt. xvi. 19.* that they may admit and exclude, according to the law of Christ.

2. Of several of those that were called to this service, it is taken notice of, that they were *mighty men of valour*, ver. 6. *strong men*, ver. 7. *able men*, ver. 8. and of one of them that *he was a wise counsellor*, ver. 14. who, probably, when he had *used this office of a deacon well*, and gave proofs of more than ordinary wisdom, *purchased to himself a good degree*, and was preferred from the gate to the council-board, *1 Tim. iii. 13.* As for those that excelled in strength of body, and courage and resolution of mind, they were thereby qualified for the post assigned them; for whatever service God calls men to, he either finds them fit, or makes them so.

3. The sons of Obed-edom were employed in this office; sixty two of that family. This was he that entertained the ark with reverence and cheerfulness, and see how he was rewarded for it. (1.) He had *eight sons*, ver. 5. *for God blessed him.* The increase and building up of families is owing to the divine blessing; and a great blessing it is to a family to have many children, when they are as those here, able for, and eminent in the service of God. (2.) His sons were preferred to places of trust in the sanctuary. They had faithfully attended the ark in their own house, and now were called to attend it in God's house. He that is trusty in a little, shall be trusted with more. He that keeps God's ordinances in his own tent, is fit to have the custody of them in God's tabernacle, *1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.* *I have kept thy law*, saith David, and *this I had, because I kept thy precepts*, *Psal. cxix. 55, 56.*

4. It is said of one here, that *though he was not the first-born, his father made him the chief*, ver. 10. either because he was very excellent, or because the elder son was very weak. He was made chief, perhaps not in inheriting the estate, for that was forbidden by the law, *Deut. xxi. 16, 17.* but in this service, which required personal qualifications.

5. The porters, as the singers, had their post assigned them by lot; so many at such a gate, and so many at such a one, that every one might know his post, and make it good, ver. 13. It is not said they were cast into twenty four courses, as before, but here are the names of about twenty four, ver. 1, — 11. and the posts assigned are twenty four, ver. 17, 18. We have therefore reason to think they were distributed into so many companies. Happy they who dwell in God's house; for as they are well fed, well taught, and well employed, so they are well guarded. Men attended at the gates of the temple, but angels at the gates of the new Jerusalem, *Rev. xxi. 12.*

20. And of the Levites, Ahijah *was* over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things. 21. *As concerning* the sons of Laadan: the sons of the Gershonite Laadan, chief fathers, *even* of Laadan the Gershonite *were*, Jehieli. 22. The sons of Jehieli; Zetham, and Joel his brother, *which were* over the treasures of the house of the LORD. 23. Of the Amramites, *and* the Izharites, the Hebronites, *and* the Uzzielites: 24. And Shebuel the son of Gershon the son of Moses, *was* ruler of the treasures. 25. And his brethren by Eliezer; Rehabiah his son, and Jeshaiah his son, and Joram his son, and Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son. 26. Which Shelomith, and his brethren, *were* over all the treasures of the dedicate things, which David the king and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host had dedicated. 27. Out of the spoils won in battles, did they dedicate to maintain the house of the LORD. 28. And all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah had dedicated, *and* whosoever had dedicated *any thing*, it was under the hand of Shelomith, and of his brethren.

Observe, 1. There were *treasures of the house of God*: A great house cannot be well kept without stores of all manner of provisions. Much was expended daily upon the altar; flour, wine, oil, salt, fuel, besides the lambs; quantities of these were to be kept beforehand, besides the sacred vestments and utensils: These were the *treasures of the house of God*. And because money answers all things, doubtless they had a great deal of cash, which was received from the peoples offerings, wherewith they bought in what they had occasion for. And, perhaps, much was laid up for an exigence. These treasures typified the plenty there is in our heavenly Father's house, enough and to spare. In Christ, the true temple, are hid *treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and unspeakable riches.*

2. There were *treasures of dedicate things*; dedicated mostly out of the spoils won in battle, ver. 27. as a grateful acknowledgment of the divine protection. Abraham gave Melchisedec the tenth of the spoils, *Heb. vii. 4.* In Moses's time, the of-

ficers of the army, when they returned victorious, brought of their spoils an *oblation to the Lord*, *Numb. xxxi. 50.* Of late this pious custom had been revived, and not only Samuel and David, but Saul, and Abner, and Joab had dedicated of their spoils to the honour and support of the house of God, ver. 28. Note, The more God bestows upon us, the more he expects from us in works of piety and charity. Great hits call for proportionable returns. When we look over our estates, we should consider, here are convenient things, rich things, it may be, and fine things; but where are the dedicated things? Men of war must honour God with their spoils. 3. These treasures had treasurers, those that were over them, ver. 20, 26. whose business it was to keep them, that neither *moth nor rust* might corrupt them, nor *thieves break through to steal*; to give out as there was occasion, and to see that they were not wasted, embezzled, or alienated to any common use: and, it is probable, they kept accounts of all that was brought in, and how it was laid out.

29. ¶ Of the Izrahites, Chenaniah and his sons *were* for the outward business over Israel, for officers and judges. 30. And of the Hebronites, HATHABIAH and his brethren, men of valour, a thousand and seven hundred *were* officers among them of Israel on this side Jordan westward, in all business of the LORD, and in the service of the king. 31. Among the Hebronites *was* Jerijah the chief, *even* among the Hebronites, according to the generations of his fathers. In the fortieth year of the reign of David, they were sought for, and there were found among them mighty men of valour, at Jazer of Gilead. 32. And his brethren, men of valour, *were* two thousand and seven hundred chief fathers, whom king David made rulers over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God, and affairs of the king.

All the offices in the house of God being well provided with Levites, we have here an account of those that were employed as officers and judges, in the outward business, which must not be neglected, no, not for the temple itself. The magistracy is an ordinance of God for the good of the church, as truly as the ministry is. And here we are told,

1. That the Levites were employed in the administration of justice, in concurrence with the princes and elders of the several tribes, who could not be supposed to understand the law so well as the Levites, who made it their business to study it. None of those Levites who were employed in the service of the sanctuary, none of the singers or porters were concerned in this outward business; either one was enough to engage the whole man, and it was presumption for any to undertake both.

2. Their charge was both *in all business of the Lord*, and *in the service of the king*, ver. 30. and again, ver. 32. they managed the affairs of the country, as well ecclesiastical as civil, took care both of God's tithes and the king's taxes; punished offences committed immediately against God and his honour, and those against the government, and the publick peace; guarded both against idolatry, and against injustice; and took care to put the laws in execution against both. Some, it is likely, applied themselves to the affairs of religion, others to secular affairs; and so between both, God and the king were well served: It is happy with a kingdom, when its civil and sacred interests are thus twisted, and jointly minded and advanced.

3. There were more Levites employed as judges with the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, than with all the rest of the tribes; there were two thousand seven hundred: whereas on the west side of Jordan, there were but one thousand seven hundred, ver. 30, 32. Either those remote tribes were not so well furnished as the rest with judges of their own; or because they lying furthest from Jerusalem, and on the borders of the neighbouring nations, were most in danger of being infected with idolatry, and most needed the help of Levites to prevent it. The frontiers must be well guarded.

4. This is said to be done (as were all the foregoing settlements) in the fortieth year of the reign of David, ver. 31. that was the last year of his reign. We should be so much the more industrious to do good, *as we see the day approaching.* If we live not to enjoy the fruit of our labours, grudge it not to those that shall come after us.

## C H A P. XXVII.

In this chapter we have the civil list, including the military.

(1.) The twelve captains for every several month of the year, ver. 1—15. (2.) The princes of the several tribes, ver. 16—24. (3.) The officers of the court, ver. 25—34.



1. **N**OW the children of Israel after their number, *to wit*, the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month, throughout all the months of the year, of every course *were* twenty and four thousand. 2. Over the first course for the first month, *was* Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 3. Of the children of Perez, *was* the chief of all the captains of the host for the first month. 4. And over the course of the second month, *was* Dodai an Ahohite, and of his course *was* Mikloth also the ruler: in his course likewise *were* twenty and four thousand. 5. The third captain of the host for the third month, *was* Benaiah the son of Jehoiada a chief priest: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 6. *This is that* Benaiah, *who was* mighty among the thirty, and above the thirty: and in his course *was* Ammizabad his son. 7. The fourth captain for the fourth month, *was* Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 8. The fifth captain for the fifth month, *was* Shamhuth the Izrahite: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 9. The sixth captain for the sixth month, *was* Ira the son of Ikkezh the Tekoite: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 10. The seventh captain for the seventh month, *was* Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 11. The eighth captain for the eighth month, *was* Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zarahites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 12. The ninth captain for the ninth month, *was* Abiezer the Anetothite, of the Benjaminites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 13. The tenth captain for the tenth month, *was* Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarahites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 14. The eleventh captain for the eleventh month, *was* Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand. 15. The twelfth captain for the twelfth month, *was* Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

We have here an account of the militia of the kingdom, and the regulation of that. David was himself a man of war, and had done great things with the sword; great armies he had brought into the field, now here we are told how he marshalled them when God had given him rest from all his enemies. He did not keep them all together, for that would have been a hardship on them and the country; yet he did not disband and disperse them all, then he had left his kingdom naked, and his people would have forgot the arts of war, wherein they had been instructed. He therefore contrives to keep up a constant force, and yet not a standing army. The model is very prudent.

1. He kept up twenty four thousand constantly in arms, I suppose in a body, and disciplined, in one part or other of the kingdom; the free-holders carrying their own arms, and bearing their own charges while they were up. This was a sufficient strength for the securing of the publick peace and safety. Those that are Israelites indeed, must learn war, for we have enemies to grapple with, whom we are concerned constantly to stand upon our guard against.

2. He changes them every month; so that the whole number of the militia amounted to two hundred eighty eight thousand, perhaps, about a fifth part of the able men of the kingdom. By distributing them thus into twelve courses, they were all instructed in, and accustomed to military exercises, and yet none were compelled to be in service, and upon charge above one month in the year, which they might very well afford, unless upon extraordinary occasions, and then they might all be got together presently. It is the wisdom of governors, and much their praise, while they provide for the publick safety, to contrive how to make it effectual, and yet easy, and as little as possible burthensome to the people.

3. Every course had a commander in chief over it, besides the subaltern officers that were rulers of thousands, and hundreds, and fifties; there was one general officer to each course, or legion. All these twelve great commanders are mentioned among David's worthies and champions, 2 Sam. xxiii. and 1 Chron. xi. They had first signalized themselves by their great actions, and then they were advanced to those great preferments. It is well with a kingdom when honour thus attends merit. Benaiah is here called a chief priest, ver. 5. But *cohen* signifying both

a priest and a prince, it might better be translated here a chief ruler, or (as in the margin) a principal officer. Dodai had Mikloth (ver. 4.) either for his substitute when he was absent or infirm, or for his successor when he was dead. Benaiah had his son under him, ver. 6. Asahel had his son after him, ver. 7. and by that, it seems, that this plan of the militia was laid in the beginning of David's reign; for Asahel was killed by Abner, while David reigned in Hebron. And when his wars were over, he revived this method, and left the military affairs in this posture, for the peaceable reign of his son Solomon. When we think ourselves most safe, yet while we are here in the body, we must keep in a readiness for spiritual conflicts: Let *not him that girdeth on the harness, boast as he that puts it off.*

16. ¶ Furthermore, over the tribes of Israel: the ruler of the Reubenites *was* Eliezer the son of Zichri: of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maacah: 17. Of the Levites, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel: of the Aaronites, Zadok: 18. Of Judah, Elihu, *one* of the brethren of David: of Issachar, Omri the son of Michael; 19. Of Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah: of Naphtali, Jerimoth the son of Azriel: 20. Of the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah: of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaias: 21. Of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah: of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner. 22. Of Dan, Azareel the son of Jeroham. These *were* the princes of the tribes of Israel. 23. ¶ But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said, he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens. 24. Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel, neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David. 25. ¶ And over the kings treasures *was* Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the store-houses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, in the castles, *was* Jehonathan the son of Uziah. 26. And over them that did work of the field for tillage of the ground, *was* Ezri the son of Chelub. 27. And over the vineyards *was* Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase of the vineyards for the vine-cellars, *was* Zabdi the Shiphmite. 28. And over the olive-trees, and the sycomore-trees, that *were* in the low plains, *was* Baal-hanan the Gederite: and over the cellars of oyl *was* Joash. 29. And over the herds that fed in Sharon, *was* Shitrai the Sharonite: and over the herds that *were* in the valleys, *was* Shaphat the son of Adlai. 30. Over the camels also, *was* Obil the Ishmeelite: and over the asses, *was* Jehdeiah the Meronothite. 31. And over the flocks, *was* Jaziz the Hagerite. All these *were* the rulers of the substance which *was* king Davids. 32. Also Jonathan Davids uncle was a counsellor, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni *was* with the kings sons. 33. And Ahithophel *was* the counsellor, and Hushai the Archite *was* the kings companion. 34. And after Ahithophel, *was* Jehoiada the son of Benaiah and Abiathar: and the general of the kings army *was* Joab.

We have here an account,

1. Of the princes of the tribes: something of the ancient order instituted by Moses in the wilderness, was still kept up, that every tribe should have its prince or chief. It is probable, it was kept up all along, either by election, or by succession in the same family; and those are here named, who were found in that office when this account was taken. Elihu, or Eliab, who was prince of Judah, was the eldest Son of Jesse, and descended in a right line from Nahshon and Salmon, the princes of this tribe in Moses's time. Whether these princes were in the nature of lord lieutenants, that guided them in their military affairs; or chief justices that presided in their courts of judgment, doth not appear. Their power we may suppose much less now all the tribes were united under one king, than it had been, when for the most part they acted separately. Our religion obligeth us to be subject not only to *the king as supreme, but unto governors under him*, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. the princes that decree justice. Of Benjamin, *was* Jaaziel the son of Abner, ver. 21. Though Abner was David's enemy, and opposed his coming to the crown, yet David would not oppose the preferment of his son, but, perhaps, nominated him to this post of honour; which teaches us to render good for evil.

2. Of the numbring of the people, ver. 23, 24. It is here said, (1.) That when David ordered the people to be numbred, he forbade the numbring of those under twenty years old, thinking



ing thereby to save the reflection, which what he did, might otherwise cast upon the promise that they should be innumerable; yet it was but a poor salvo; for those under twenty never were used to be numbred, and the promise of their numbers, chiefly respected the effective men. (2.) That that account which David took of the people in the pride of his heart, turned to no good account; for it was never perfected, nor done with exactness, nor was it ever recorded as an authentick account; Joab was sick of it, and did it by the halves; David was ashamed of it, and willing it should be forgotten, because there fell wrath for it against Israel. A good man cannot in the reflection, please himself with that, which he knows God is displeased with; cannot make use of that, nor take comfort in that which is obtained by sin.

3. Of the officers of the court.

(1.) The rulers of the king's substance; as they are called, *ver.* 31. such as had the oversight and charge of the king's tillage, his vineyards, his olive-yards, his herds, his camels, his asses, his flocks. Here are no officers for state, none for sport, no master of the wardrobe, no master of the ceremonies, no master of the horse, no master of the hounds, but all for substance, agreeable to the simplicity and plainness of those times. David was a great soldier, a great scholar, and a great prince, and yet a great husband of his estate, kept a great deal of ground in his own hand, and stocked it, not for pleasure, but profit; for the king himself is *served of the field*, Eccl. v. 9. and those magistrates that would have their subjects industrious, must be themselves examples of industry and application to business, however, afterwards, the poor of the land were thought good enough to be vine-dressers and husbandmen; now David put his great men to preside in those employments.

2. The attendants on the king's person. They were such as were eminent for wisdom, being designed for converse. His uncle, that was a wise man, and a scribe, not only well skilled in politicks, but well read in the scriptures, was his counsellor, *ver.* 34. Another, who no doubt excelled in learning and prudence, was tutor to his children; Ahitophel, a very cunning man, was his counsellor; but Hushai, an honest man, was his companion and confident. It doth not appear that he had many counsellors; but those he had were men of great abilities. Much of the wisdom of princes is seen in the choice of their ministry. But David, though he had all these trusty and well-beloved counsellers and counsellors about him, preferred his bible before them all, *Psal.* cxix. 24. *Thy testimonies are my delight, and my counsellors.*

#### C H A P. XXVIII.

*The account we had of David's exit in the beginning of the first book of Kings, does not make his sun near so bright, as this here, in this and the following chapter, where we have his solemn farewell both to his son and to his subjects, and must own that he finished well. In this chapter we have, (1.) A general convention of the states summoned to meet, ver. 1. (2.) A solemn declaration of the divine entail both of the crown, and of the honour of building the temple, upon Solomon, ver. 2—7. (3.) An exhortation both to the people, and to Solomon, to make religion their business, ver. 8—10. (4.) The model and materials delivered to Solomon for the building of the temple, ver. 11—19. (5.) Encouragement given him to undertake it, and proceed in it, ver. 20, 21.*

1. **A**ND David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men unto Jerusalem. 2. Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people, *As for me*, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: 3. But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou *hast been* a man of war, and *hast shed blood*. 4. Howbeit, the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father, to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father, he liked me to make *me* king over all Israel: 5. And of all my sons (for the LORD hath given me many sons) he hath chosen Solomon my son, to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. 6. And he said

unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. 7. Moreover, I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day. 8. Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. 9. ¶ And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. 10. Take heed now, for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong and do it.

A great deal of service David had done in his day, had *served his generation according to the will of God*, Acts xiii. 36. But now the time draws nigh that he must die, and, as a type of the Son of David, the nearer he comes to his end, the more busy he is, and doth his work with all his might. He is now a little recovered from that ill fit he had, 1 Kings i. 1. when *they covered him with clothes and he got no heat*: But what cure is there for old age? He therefore improves his recovery, as giving him an opportunity of doing God and his country a little more service.

1. He summons all the great men to attend him, that he might take leave of them all together, *ver.* 1. Thus Moses did, *Deut.* xxxi. 28. and Joshua, *chap.* xxiii. 2.—xxiv. 1. David would not declare the settlement of the crown, but in the presence, and to the satisfaction of those that were the representatives of the people.

2. He addresseth himself to them, with a great deal of respect and tenderness. He not only made a shift to get out of his bed to give them a meeting, the occasion putting new spirits into him, but he rose out of his chair, and *stood up upon his feet*, *ver.* 2. in reverence to God, whose will he was to declare, and in reverence to this solemn assembly of the Israel of God, as if he looked upon himself, though *major singulis*, yet *minor universis*. His age and infirmities as well as his honour, might well have allowed him to keep his seat, but he would shew, that he was indeed humbled for the pride of his heart, both in the numbers of his people, and his dominion over them. Then it was too much his pleasure, that they were all his servants, *chap.* xxi. 3: now he calls them his brethren, whom he loved, his people, whom he took care of, not his servants, whom he had command of. *Hear me, my brethren and my people.* It becomes superiors thus to speak with affection and condescension, even to their inferiors: They will be not the less honoured for it, but the more loved. Thus he engages their attention to what he was about to say.

3. He declares the purpose he had to build a temple for God, and God's disallowing of that purpose, *ver.* 2, 3. This he had signified to Solomon before, *chap.* xxii. 7, 8. A house of rest for the ark, is here said to be a house of rest for the footstool of our God, for the heaven is his throne of glory; the earth, and the most magnificent temples that can be built upon it, is but his foot-stool. So much difference is there between the manifestations of the divine glory in the upper, and the lower world. Angels surround the throne, *Isa.* vi. 1. We poor worms do but *worship at his foot-stool*, *Psal.* xcix. 5.—cxxxii. 7. As an evidence of the sincerity of his purpose to build the temple, he tells them he had made ready for it, but God would not suffer him to proceed, because he had cut out other work for him to do, which was enough for one man to do, *viz.* The managing of the wars of Israel; he must serve the publick with the sword, another must do it with the line and the plummet. Times of rest are building times, *Acts* ix. 31.

4. He produceth his own title first, and then Solomon's to the crown, both were undoubtedly *jure divino*: They could make out such a title as no monarch on earth can, the Lord God of Israel chose them both immediately, by prophecy, not providence, *ver.* 4, 5. No right of primogeniture is pretended, *detur digniori*, not *seniori*: (1.) Judah was not the eldest son of Jacob, yet God chose that tribe to be the ruling tribe, Jacob entailed the scepter upon it, *Gen.* xlix. 10. (2.) It doth not appear that the family of Jesse was the senior house of that tribe; from Judah it is certain it was not, for Shelah was before Pharez; whether from Nahshon and Salmon, is not certain. Ram, the father of Nahshon had an elder brother, 1 Chron. ii. 9. perhaps so had Boaz, Obed, Jesse, yet God chose the house of my father. (3.) David was the youngest son of Jesse, yet God liked him to make him king, so it seemed good unto him. God takes whom he likes, and likes whom he makes like him, as he did David, a man after his own heart. (4.) Solomon was one of the



the youngest sons of David, and yet God chose him to sit upon the throne, because he was the likeliest of them all to build the temple, the wisest and best inclined.

5. He opens to them God's gracious purposes concerning Solomon, *ver. 6, 7. I have chosen him to be my son.* Thus he declares the decree, that the Lord had said to Solomon, as a type of Christ, *Thou art my Son*, *Psal. ii. 7. the son of my love*; for he was called Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, and Christ is his beloved son. Of him God said, as a figure of him that was to come, (1.) *He shall build my house*, Christ is both the founder, and the foundation of the gospel-temple. (2.) *I will establish his kingdom for ever.* This must have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, which shall continue in his hands through all the ages of time, *Isa. ix. 7. Luke i. 33.* and shall then be delivered up to God, even the Father, yet perhaps to be delivered back to the Redeemer for ever. As to Solomon, this promise of the establishment of his kingdom, is here made conditional, *If he be constant to my commandments, as at this day.* Solomon was now very towardly and good; if he continue so, his kingdom shall continue, otherwise not. Note, If we be constant to our duty, then, and not otherwise, we may expect the continuance of God's favour. Let those that are well taught, and begin well, take notice of this, if they be constant, they are happy; perseverance wears the crown, though it wins it not.

6. He charges them to adhere steadfastly to God and their duty, *ver. 8. Observe, (1.) The matter of this charge: Keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God.* The Lord was their God, his commandments must be their rule, they must have respect to them all, must make conscience of keeping them, and in order thereunto must seek for them, *i. e.* must be inquisitive concerning their duty, search the scriptures, take advice, seek the law at their mouth, whose lips were to keep this knowledge, and pray to God to teach and direct them. God's commandments will not be kept without great care. (2.) The solemnity of it: He chargeth them in the sight of all Israel, who would all have notice of this publick charge, and in the audience of their God. God is witness, and this congregation is witness that they have good counsel given them, and fair warning, if they do not take it, it is their fault, and God and man will be witnesses against them. See *1 Tim. v. 21. 2 Tim. iv. 1.* Those that profess religion, as they tender the favour of God, and their reputation with men, must be faithful to their profession. (3.) The motive to observe this charge; it was the way to be happy, to have the peaceable possession of this good land themselves, and to preserve the entail of it upon their children.

7. He concludes with a charge to Solomon himself, *ver. 9, 10.* He is much concerned that he should be religious. He was to be a great man, but he must not think religion below him; a wise man, and this would be his wisdom. Observe, (1.) The charge he gives him. He must look upon God, as the God of his father, his good father, who had devoted him to God, and educated him for God. He was born in God's house, and therefore bound in duty to be his; brought up in his house, and therefore bound in gratitude. *Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.* He must know God, and serve him; we cannot serve God aright, if we do not know him; and in vain do we know him, if we do not serve him: Serve him with heart and mind; we make nothing of religion if we do not mind it, and make heart-work of it: Serve him with a perfect, *i. e.* an upright heart; for sincerity is our gospel perfection; and with a willing mind, from a principle of love, and as a willing people, cheerfully, and with pleasure. 2. The arguments to enforce this charge. Two arguments of general inducement. (1.) That the secrets of our souls are open before God, he searcheth all hearts, even the hearts of kings, which to men are unsearchable, *Prov. xxv. 3.* We must therefore be sincere, because if we deal deceitfully, God sees it, and cannot be imposed upon; must therefore employ our thoughts, and engage them in God's service, because he fully understands all the imaginations of them, both good and bad. (2.) That we are happy or miserable here, and for ever, according as we do, or do not serve God; *if we seek him diligently, he will be found of us*, and that is enough to make us happy, *Heb. xi. 6.* If we forsake him, desert his service, and turn from following him, he will cast us off for ever, and that is enough to make us miserable. Note, God never casts any off, till they have first cast him off. Here is one argument peculiar to Solomon, *ver. 10. Thou art to build an house for the sanctuary*, therefore seek and serve God, that that work may be done from a good principle, in a right manner, and may be accepted. 3. The means prescribed in order hereunto, and they are prescribed to us all. (1.) Caution; take heed; beware of every thing that looks like, or leads to that which is evil. (2.) Courage; be strong and do it. We cannot do our work as we should, unless we put on resolution, and fetch in strength from divine grace.

11. ¶ Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the

treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy-seat, 12. And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicate things. 13. Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD. 14. He gave of gold by weight, for things of gold, for all instruments of all manner of service, silver, also for all instruments of silver, by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service: 15. Even the weight for the candlesticks of gold, and for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof: and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, both for the candlestick, and also for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick. 16. And by weight he gave gold for the tables of shew-bread, for every table, and likewise silver for the tables of silver; 17. Also pure gold for flesh-hooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the golden basons he gave gold by weight for every bason; and likewise silver by weight for every bason of silver: 18. And for the altar of incense, refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. 19. All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern. 20. And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee, he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD. 21. And behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, even they shall be with thee, for all the service of the house of God, and there shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship, every willing skilful man for any manner of service: also the princes and all the people will be wholly at thy commandment.

As for the general charge that David gave his son to seek God and serve him, the book of the law was in that his only rule, and there needed no other: But in building the temple, David was now to give him three things.

1. A model of the building; because it was to be such a building, as neither he nor his architects ever saw. Moses had a pattern of the tabernacle shewed him in the mount, *Heb. viii. 5.* so had David of the temple, by the immediate hand of God upon him, *ver. 19.* It was given him in writing, probably by the ministry of an angel, or as clearly and exactly represented to his mind, as if it had been in writing: But it is said, *ver. 12. "He had this pattern by the spirit"*: The contrivance either of David's devotion, or of Solomon's wisdom, must not be trusted to in an affair of this nature. The temple must be a sacred thing, and a type of Christ, there must be in it, not only convenience and decency, but significancy, it was a kind of sacrament, and therefore it must not be left to man's art or invention to contrive it; but it must be framed by divine institution, Christ, the true temple, the church, the gospel-temple, and heaven the everlasting temple, are all framed according to the divine councils, and the plan laid in the divine wisdom, ordained before the world for God's glory and ours. This pattern David gave to Solomon, that he might know what to provide, and might go by a certain rule. When Christ left with his disciples a charge to build his gospel-church, he gave them an exact model of it, ordering them to observe that, and that only which he commanded. The particular models are here mentioned; of the porch, which was higher than the rest, like a steeple; then the houses, both the holy place, and the most holy, with the rooms adjoining, which were for treasuries, chambers and parlours, especially the place of the mercy-seat, *ver. 11.* Of the courts likewise, and the chambers about them, in which the dedicate things were laid up. Bishop Patrick supposeth, that among other things, the tabernacle which Moses reared, and all the utensils of it, which there was now no further occasion for, were laid up here, signifying, that in the fulness of time all the Mosaick oeconomy, all the rites and ceremonies of that dispensation should be decently laid aside, and something better come in their room. He gave him a table of the courses of the priests, patterns of the vessels of service, *ver. 13.* and a pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, *ver. 18.* Besides the two cherubims over the mercy-seat, there were two much larger, whose wings reached from wall to wall,



1 *Kings* vi. 23, &c. and of these, David here gave Solomon the pattern; called a chariot; for the angels are the chariots of God, *Psal.* lxxiii. 17.

2. Materials for the most costly of the utensils of the temple. That they might not be made any less than the patterns, he weighed out stuff enough for each vessel, both of gold and silver, *ver.* 14. In the tabernacle there was but one golden candlestick, in the temple ten, 1 *Kings* vii. 49. besides silver ones, which, it is supposed, were hand-candlesticks, *ver.* 15. In the tabernacle there was but one table; but in the temple, besides that on which the shew-bread was set, there were ten others for other uses, 2 *Chron.* iv. 8. besides silver tables. For this house being much larger than that, it would look bare if it had not furniture proportionable. The gold for the altar of incense, is particularly said to be refined gold, *ver.* 18. purer than any of the rest, for that was typical of the intercession of Christ, than which nothing more pure and perfect.

3. Directions which way to look for help in this great undertaking. Fear not opposition, fear not the charge, care and trouble, fear not miscarrying in it, as in the case of Uzza, fear not the reproach of the foolish builder, that began to build, and was not able to finish. Be not dismayed, (1.) God will help thee, and thou must look up to him in the first place, *ver.* 20. *The Lord God, even my God*, whom I have chosen and served, who has all along been present with me, and prospered me, and to whom, from my own experience, of his power and goodness, I recommend thee, he will be with thee, to direct, strengthen, and prosper thee; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Note, The God that owned our fathers, and carried them through the services of their day, if we be faithful to him, we may be sure will in like manner go along with us in our day, and will never leave us, while he has any work to do in us, or by us. The same that was Joshua's encouragement, *Josh.* i. 5. and Solomon's here, is given to all believers, *Heb.* xiii. 5. *He will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* God never leaves any, unless they first leave him. (2.) Good men will help thee, *ver.* 21. The priests and Levites will advise thee, and thou mayst consult with them: Thou hast good workmen, that are both willing and skilful, and those are two very good properties in a workman, especially in those that work at the temple: And lastly, the princes and the people will be so far from opposing or retarding the work, that they will be wholly at thy commandment, every one in his place ready to further it. Then good work is likely to go on, when all parties concerned are hearty in it, and none secretly clog it, but drive on heartily in it.

## C H A P. XXIX.

David had said what he had to say to Solomon. But he had something more to say to the congregation before he parts with them. (1.) He presseth them to contribute according to their ability towards the building and furnishing of the temple, *ver.* 1—5. (2.) They made their presents accordingly, very generously, *ver.* 6—9. (3.) David offered up solemn prayers and praises to God upon that occasion, *ver.* 10—20. with sacrifices, *ver.* 21. (4.) Solomon was hereupon enthroned with great joy and magnificence, *ver.* 22—25. (5.) David soon after this finished his course, *ver.* 26—30. And it is hard to say which shines brighter here, the setting sun or the rising sun.

1. **F**urthermore, David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the LORD God. 2. Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx-stones, and stones to be set, glittering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. 3. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, 4. *Even* three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal: 5. The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hand of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD? 6. ¶ Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands, and of

hundreds, with the rulers over the kings work, offered willingly, 7. And gave for the service of the house of God, of gold, five thousand talents, and ten thousand drams; and of silver, ten thousand talents; and of brass, eighteen thousand talents; and one hundred thousand talents of iron. 8. And they with whom precious stones were found, gave them to the treasures of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. 9. Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

We may here observe,

1. How handsomely David spoke to the great men of Israel, to engage them to contribute towards the building of the temple. It is our duty to provoke one another to love and to good works, not only to do good ourselves, but to draw in others to do good too as much as we can. There were many very rich men in Israel, they were all to share in the benefit of the temple, and of those peaceable days which were to befriend the building of it, and therefore, though he would not impose it on them as a tax, what they should give towards it, he would propose it to them, as a fair occasion, for a free will offering; because what is done in works of piety and charity, should be done willingly, and not by constraint; for God loves a cheerful giver.

(1.) He would have them consider, that Solomon was young and tender, and needed help, but he was the person whom God had chosen to this work, and therefore was well worthy their assistance. It is good service to encourage those in the work of God, that are as yet young and tender.

(2.) That the work was great, and all hands should contribute to the carrying of it on; the palace to be built was not for man, but for the Lord God; and the more was contributed towards the building, the more magnificent it would be, and therefore would the better answer the intention.

(3.) He tells them what great preparations had been made for this work; he did not intend to throw all the burthen upon them, nor that it should be built wholly by contributions, but that they should shew their good will, by adding to what was done, *ver.* 2. *I have prepared with all my might*, i. e. I have made it my business: Work for God must be done with all our might, or we shall bring nothing to pass in it.

(4.) He sets them a good example. Besides what was dedicated to this service out of the spoils and presents of the neighbour nations, which was for the building of the house, of which before, *chap.* xxii. 14. he had out of his own share offered largely for the beautifying and enriching of it, three thousand talents of gold, and seven thousand talents of silver, *ver.* 4, 5. and this because he had set his affection to the house of his God: He gave all this, not as Papists build churches in commutation of penance, or to make atonement for sin; nor as Pharisees gave alms, to be seen of men, but purely because he loved the habitation of God's house, so he professed, *Psal.* xxvi. 8. and here he proved it. Those that set their affection upon the service of God, will think no pains or cost too much to bestow upon it. And then our offerings are pleasing to God, when they come from love. They that set their affections on things above, will set their affection on the house of God, through which, our way to heaven lies. Now this he gives them an account of, to stir them up to do likewise. Note, Those who would draw others to that which is good, must lead themselves. Those especially, that are advanced above others in place and dignity, should especially contrive how to make their light shine before men, because the influence of their example is more powerful and more extensive than that of other people.

(5.) He stirs them up to do as he had done, *ver.* 5. *And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?* (1.) We must each of us in our several places serve the Lord, and consecrate our service to him, separate it from other things that are foreign, and interfere with it, and direct and design it for the honour and glory of God. (2.) We must make the service of God our business; must fill our hands to the Lord, so the Hebrew phrase is. They that ingage themselves in the service of God, will have their hands full, there is work enough for the whole man in that service. The filling of our hands with the service of God, intimates that we must serve him only, serve him liberally, and serve him in the strength of grace, derived from him. (3.) We must be free herein, do it willingly, and speedily, do it this day, when we are in a good mind. Who is willing? Now let him shew it.

2. How handsomely they all contributed towards the building of the temple, when they were thus stirred up to it. Though they were persuaded to it, yet it is said they offered willingly, *ver.* 6. So he saith, who knew their hearts. Nay, they offered with a perfect heart, from a good principle, and with a sincere respect to the glory of God, *ver.* 9. How generous they were, appears by the sum total of the contributions, *ver.* 7, 8. They gave like themselves, like princes, like princes of Israel.

And



And a pleasant day's work it was; for, (1.) The people rejoiced; which may be meant of the people themselves that offered, they were glad of the opportunity of honouring God thus with their substance, and glad of the prospect of bringing this good work to perfection. Or, the common people rejoiced in the generosity of their princes, that they had such rulers over them, who were forward to this good work. Every Israelite is glad to see temple work carried on with vigour. (2.) David rejoiced with great joy, to see the good effect of his psalms, and other helps of devotion he had furnished them with; rejoiced that his son and successor would have those about him that were so well affected to the house of God, and that this work which his heart was so much upon, was likely to go on. Note, It is a great reviving to good men, when they are leaving the world, to see those they leave behind zealous for religion, and likely to keep it up. *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.*

10. ¶ Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

11. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth, is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. 13. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. 14. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

15. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. 16. O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own. 17. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy, thy people which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. 18. O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee. 19. And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace for the which I have made provision. 20. ¶ And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD and the king. 21. And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt-offerings unto the LORD on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink-offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: 22. And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness, and they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.

We have here,

1. The solemn address which David made to God upon occasion of the noble subscriptions of the princes, towards the building of the temple, ver. 10. *Wherefore David blessed the Lord*, not only alone in his closet, but before all the congregation: This I expected when we read, ver. 9. that *David rejoiced with great joy*; for such a devout man as he, would, no question, make that the matter of his thanksgiving, which was so much the matter of his rejoicing. He that looked round with comfort, would certainly look up with praise. David was now old, and looked upon himself as near his end, and it well becomes aged saints, and dying saints, to have their hearts much enlarged in praise and thanksgiving: This will silence their complaints of their bodily infirmities, and help to make the prospects of death itself less. David's psalms, towards the latter end of the book, are most of them psalms of praise. The nearer we come to the world of everlasting praise, the more we should speak the language, and do the work of that world. In this address,

(1.) He adores God, and ascribes glory to him, as the God of Israel, *Blessed for ever and ever*. Our Lord's prayer ends with a doxology, much like this which David here begins with, for *thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory*. This is properly praising God, with holy awe and reverence, and agreeable affection, acknowledging, 1. His infinite perfections; not only that he is great, powerful, glorious, &c. but that his is the greatness, power and glory, i. e. he has them in, and of himself; he is the fountain and center of every thing that is bright and blessed. All that we can in our most exalted praises attribute to him, he has an unquestionable title to. His is the greatness, his greatness is immense, and incomprehensible, and all others are little, are nothing in comparison of him. His is the power, and it is almighty and irresistible; power belongs to him, and all the power of all the creatures is derived from him, and depends upon him: His is the glory; for his glory is his own end, and the end of the whole creation: All the glory we can give him with our hearts, lips, and lives, comes infinitely short of what is his due. His is the victory; he transcends and surpasseth all, and is able to conquer and subdue all things to himself, and his victories are uncontested, uncontrollable. And his is the majesty, real and personal, with him is terrible majesty, unexpressible, and unconceivable. (2.) His sovereign dominions; as rightful owner and possessor of all, *all that is in heaven and in the earth is thine*, and at thy dispose by the indisputable right of creation, and as supreme ruler and commander of all; *Thine is the kingdom*, and all kings are thy subjects, for thou art head, and art to be exalted and worshipped as head above all. (3.) His universal influence, and agency. All that are rich and honourable among the children of men, have their riches and honours from God. This acknowledgment he would have the princes take notice of, and join in, that they might not think they had merited any thing of God by their generosity; for from God they had their riches and honour, and what they returned to him, was but a small part of what they had received from him. Whoever are great among men, it is God's hand that makes them so; and whatever strength we have, it is God that gives it us, as the *God of Israel our father*, ver. 10. *Psal. lxxviii. 35.*

(2.) He acknowledgeth with thankfulness the grace of God enabling them to contribute so cheerfully towards the building of the temple, ver. 13, 14. *Now therefore our God we thank thee*. Note, The more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him, for the honour of being employed in his service, and grace enabling us in any measure to serve him. *Doth he therefore thank that servant?* Luke xvii. 9. No; but that servant has a great deal of reason to thank him. He thanks God that they were able to offer so willingly. Note, (1.) It is a great instance of the power of God's grace in us, to be able to do the work of God willingly; he works both to will and to do; and it is in the day of his power that his people are made willing; *Psal. cx. 3.* (2.) We must give God all the glory of all the good that is at any time done by ourselves or others. Our own good works must not be the matter of our pride, nor others good works the matter of our flattery, but both the matter of our praise; for certainly it is the greatest honour and pleasure in the world, faithfully to serve God.

(3.) He speaks very humbly of himself, and his people, and the offerings they had now presented to God.

(1.) For himself and those that joined with him, though they were princes, he admired that God should take such notice of them, and do so much for them, ver. 14. *Who am I, and what is my people?* David was the most honourable person, and Israel the most honourable people then in the world, yet thus doth he speak of himself and them, as unworthy the divine cognizance and favour. David now looks very great, presiding in an august assembly, appointing his successor, and making a noble present to the honour of God, and yet little and low in his own eyes; *Who am I, O Lord?* for, ver. 15. *We are strangers before thee, and sojourners*, poor despicable creatures; angels in heaven are at home there, saints on earth are but strangers here; *Our days on the earth are as a shadow*. David's days had as much of substance in them as most men's; for he was a great man, a good man, a useful man, and now an old man; one that lived long, and lived to good purpose; and yet puts himself not only into the number, but in the front of those who must acknowledge that their *days on the earth are as a shadow*; which speaks our life a vain life, a dark life, a transient life, and life that will have its period either in perfect light or perfect darkness. The next words explain it, *there is no abiding*, Heb. no expectation: we cannot expect any great matters from it, nor can we expect any long continuance of it. This is mentioned here as that which forbids us to boast of the service we do to God; alas! it is confined to a scantling of time, it is the service of a frail and short life, and therefore what can we pretend to merit by it?

(2.) As to their offerings, *Lord, faith he, of thine own have we given thee*, ver. 14. and again, ver. 16. *It cometh of thine hand,*



hand, and is all thine own. We have it from thee, as a free gift, and therefore are bound to use it for thee; and what we present to thee is but rent or interest from thine own. "In like manner (saith bishop Patrick) we ought to acknowledge "God in all spiritual things, referring every good thought, "good purpose, good work to his grace, from whom we receive it." Let him that glories therefore, glory in the Lord.

(3.) He appeals to God concerning his own sincerity in what he did, *ver. 17*. It is a great satisfaction to a good man, to think that God *tries the heart*, and *has pleasure in uprightness*, that whoever misinterpret or condemn it, he is acquainted with, and approves of the *way of the righteous*. It was David's comfort, that God knew with what pleasure he both offered his own, and saw the peoples offering. He was neither proud of his own good work, nor envious of the good works of others.

(4.) He prays to God both for the people and for Solomon, that both might hold on as they began. In this prayer he addresseth himself to God as the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, a God in covenant with them, and with us for their sakes: Lord, give us grace to make good our part of the covenant, that we may not forfeit the benefit of it. Or thus; they were kept in their integrity by the grace of God establishing their way; let the same grace that was sufficient for them, be so for us. 1. For the people he prays, *ver. 18*. That what good God had put into their minds, he would always keep there, that they might never be worse than they were now; might never lose the convictions they were now under, nor cool in their affections to the house of God; but always have the same thoughts of things they now seemed to have. It is of great consequence to us what is innermost, and what uppermost in the imagination of the thoughts of our heart, what we aim at, and what we love to think of: if any good have got possession of our hearts, or the hearts of our friends, it is good by prayer to commit the custody of it to the grace of God; Lord, keep it there, keep it for ever there. David has prepared materials for the temple, but, Lord, do thou prepare their hearts for such a privilege; *establish* their hearts, so the margin. Confirm their resolutions; they are in a good mind, keep them so, when I am gone, them and theirs for ever. 2. For Solomon he prays, *ver. 19*. *Give him a perfect heart*. He had charged him, *chap. xxviii. 9*. to serve God *with a perfect heart*, now here he prays to God to give him such a heart. He doth not pray, Lord, make him a rich man, a great man, a learned man, but, Lord, make him an honest man; for that is better than all. Lord, *give him a perfect heart*, not only in general, *to keep thy commandments*, but in particular, *to build the palace*, that he may do that service with a single eye. Yet his building the house would not prove him to have a perfect heart, unless he made conscience of keeping God's commandments. It is not helping to build churches that will save us, if we live in disobedience to God's law.

2. The cheerful concurrence of this great assembly in this great solemnity.

1. They joined with David in the adoration of God. When he had done his prayer, he called to them to testify their concurrence, (*Now bless the Lord your God, ver. 20.*) which accordingly they did, by *bowing down their heads*, a gesture of adoration. Whoever is the mouth of the congregation, those only have the benefit who join with him, not by *bowing down the head* so much as by *lifting up the soul*.

2. They paid their respects to the king, looking upon him as an instrument in God's hand of much good to them; and in honouring him, they honoured God.

3. The next day they offered abundance of sacrifices to God, *ver. 21*. both burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed, and peace-offerings, which the offerer had the greatest part of to himself. Hereby they testified a generous gratitude to God for the good posture their publick affairs were in, though David was going off.

4. They feasted and rejoiced before God, *ver. 22*. In token of their joy in God, and communion with him, they feasted upon the peace-offerings, in a religious manner, before the Lord. What had been offered to God they feasted upon; by which was intimated to them, that they should be never the poorer for their late liberal contributions to the service of the temple, they themselves should feast upon the comfort of it.

5. They made Solomon king the second time: he having been before anointed in haste upon occasion of Adonijah's rebellion, it was thought fit to repeat it, for the greater satisfaction of the people. They *anointed him to the Lord*. Magistrates must look upon themselves as set apart for God, to be his ministers, and must rule accordingly in the fear of God. Zadok also

was anointed to be priest, in the room of Abiathar, who had lately forfeited his honour. Happy art thou, O Israel, under such a prince and such a pontiff.

23. Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered, and all Israel obeyed him. 24. And all the princes and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. 25. And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him *such* royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel. 26. ¶ Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. 27. And the time that he reigned over Israel, *was* forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three *years* reigned he in Jerusalem. 28. And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead. 29. Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer, 30. With all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.

These verses bring king Solomon to his throne, and king David to his grave: Thus the rising generation thrusts out that which went before, and saith, Make room for us. Every one has his day.

1. Here is Solomon rising, *ver. 23*. *Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord*. Not his throne which he had prepared in the heavens, but the throne of Israel is called *the throne of the Lord*, because he is not only King of all nations, and all kings rule under him, but was in a peculiar manner King of Israel, 1 *Sam. xii. 12*. he had the founding, he had the filling of their throne, by immediate direction; the municipal laws of their kingdom were divine; Urim and prophets were the privy counsellors of their princes, therefore is their throne called *the throne of the Lord*. Solomon's kingdom typified the kingdom of the Messiah, and his is indeed *the throne of the Lord*; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to him; hence he calls him *his King*, *Psal. ii. 6*. Being set on the *throne of the Lord*, the throne to which God called him, he prospered: They that follow the divine conduct, may expect success by the divine blessing. Solomon prospered; for,

(1.) His people *paid honour to him*, as one to whom honour is due. *All Israel obeyed him, i. e.* were ready to swear allegiance to him, *ver. 23*. the *princes and mighty men*, and even the *sons of David*, though by seniority their title to the crown was prior to his, and they might think themselves wronged by his advancement; yet because God thought fit to make him king, and made him fit to be so, they all *submitted themselves to him*; God inclined their hearts to do so, that his reign might from the first be peaceable. His father was a better man than he, and yet came to the crown with much difficulty; after long delay, and by many slow steps; David had more faith, and therefore had it more tried. They *submitted themselves*, *Heb. They gave the hand under Solomon, i. e.* bound themselves by oath to be true to him. Putting the hand under the thigh, was a ceremony anciently used in swearing. Or, they were so entirely devoted, that they would put their hand under his feet to serve him.

(2.) God put honour upon him; for those that honour him he will honour: *The Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly, ver. 25*. His very countenance and presence, I am apt to think, had something in them very great and awful: all he said, and all he did commanded respect. None of all the judges or kings of Israel, his predecessors, made such a figure as he did, nor lived in such splendor.

2. Here is David's setting; that great man going off the stage. The historian here brings him to the end of his day, leaves him asleep, and draws the curtains about him.

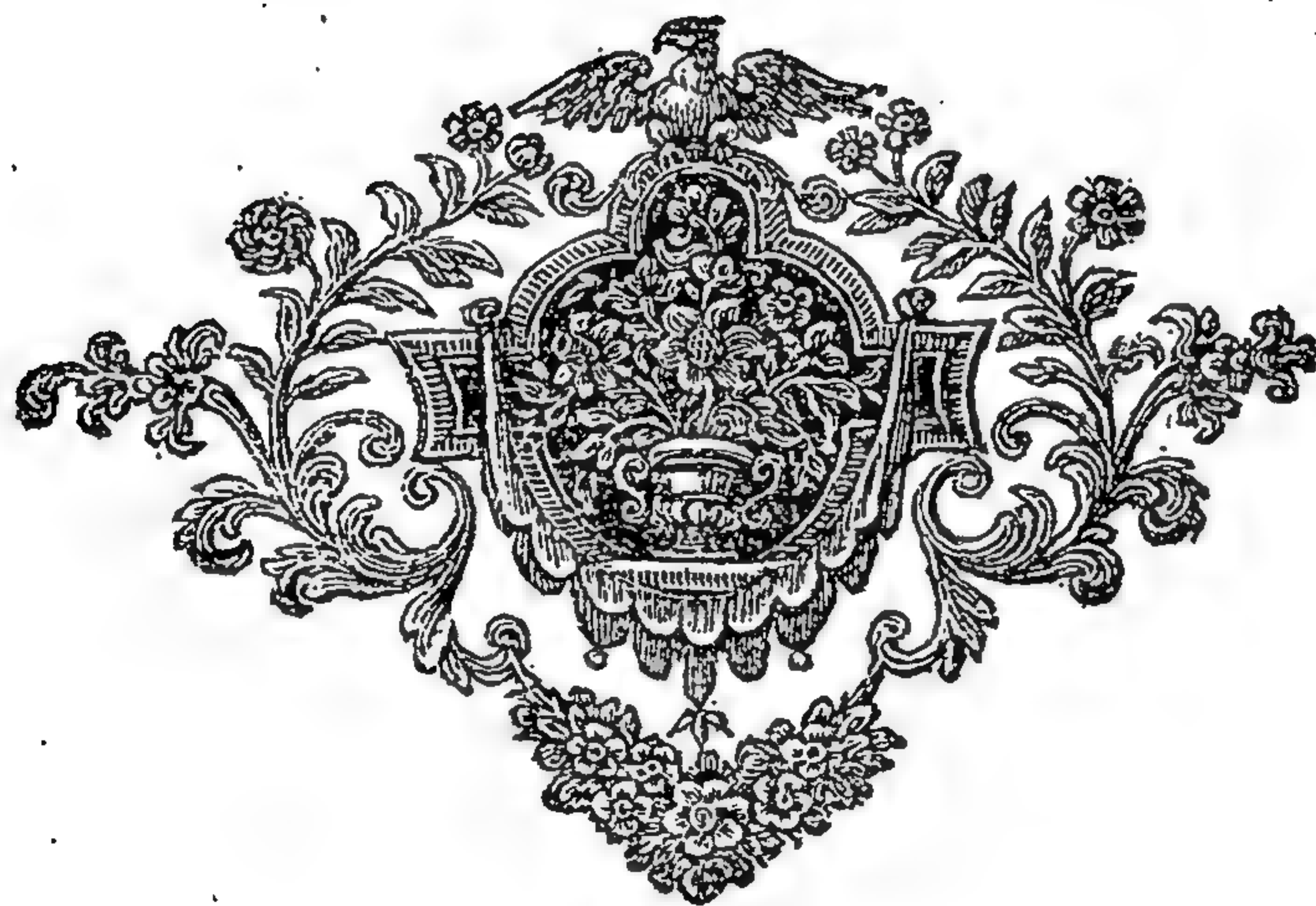
1. He gives a summary account of the years of his reign, *ver. 26, 27*. He reigned forty years, as Moses did, Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, Eli, Samuel and Saul, who were before him, and Solomon after him.

2. He gives a short account of his death, *ver. 28*. that he died *full of days, riches, and honour*, that is, (1.) Loaded with them; he was very old and very rich, and very much honoured both of God and man. He had been a man of war from his



his youth, and as such had his soul continually in his hand; yet he was not cut off in the midst of his days, but was preserved through all the dangers of a military life, lived to a good old age, and died in peace, died in his bed, and yet in the bed of honour. (2.) Satiated with them. He was *full of days, riches and honour*; i. e. he had enough of this world, and of the riches and honours of it, and knew when he had enough; for he was very willing to die and leave it, having said, *Psal. xlix. 15. God shall receive me*; and *Psal. xxiii. 5. Thou art with me*. A good man will soon be full of days, riches and honour, but will never be satisfied with them; no satisfaction but in God's loving-kindness.

3. For a fuller account of David's life and reign, he remits his reader to the histories or records of those times, which were written by Samuel while he lived, and continued after his death by Nathan and Gad, *ver. 29*. There was related what was observable in his government at home, and his wars abroad, the times, i. e. the events of time that were concerning him, *ver. 29, 30*. These registers were then in being, but are now lost. Note, Good use may be made of those histories of the church which are authentick, though not sacred, or of divine inspiration.





A N

E X P O S I T I O N

Of the Second BOOK of

C H R O N I C L E S,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

*This book begins with the reign of Solomon, and the building of the temple, and thenceforward continues the history of the kings of Judah to the captivity, and so concludes with the fall of that illustrious monarchy, and the destruction of the temple. That monarchy of the house of David, as it was prior in time, so it was superior in worth and dignity to all those four celebrated ones which Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of. The Babylonian monarchy I reckon to begin in Nebuchadnezzar himself, Thou art that head of gold, that lasted but about seventy years. The Persian monarchy in several families, about one hundred and thirty. The Grecians in their several branches about three hundred; and three hundred more went far with the Roman. But as I reckon David a greater hero than any of the founders of those monarchies, and Solomon a more magnificent prince than any of those that were the glories of them, so the succession was kept up in a lineal descent throughout the whole monarchy, which continued considerable between four and five hundred years: and after a long eclipse shone forth again in the kingdom of the Messiah, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. This history of the Jewish monarchy as it is more authentick, so it is more entertaining and more instructive than the histories of any of those monarchies. We had the story of the house of David before in the first and second books of Kings, intermixed with that of the kings of Israel, which there took up more room than that of Judah, but here we have it entire: much is repeated here which we had before, yet many passages of the story are enlarged upon, and divers added, which we had not before, especially relating to the affairs of religion, for it is a church-history, and is written for our learning, to let nations and families know that then and then only they can expect to prosper when they keep in the way of their duty to God; for all along the good kings prospered, and the wicked kings suffered. The peaceable reign of Solomon we have chap. i.—ix. The blemished reign of Rehoboam, chap. x.—xii. The short but busy reign of Abijah, chap. xiii. The long and happy reign of Asa, chap. xiv.—xvi. The pious and prosperous reign of Jehoshaphat, chap. xvii, xviii, xix, xx. The impious and infamous reigns of Jehoram and Ahaziah, chap. xxi, xxii. The unsteady reigns of Joash and Amaziah, chap. xxiv, xxv. The long and prosperous reign of Uzziah, chap. xxvi. The regular reign of Jotham, chap. xxvii. The profane and wicked reign of Ahaz, chap. xxviii. The gracious glorious reign of Hezekiah, chap. xxix—xxxii. The wicked reigns of Manasseh and Amon, chap. xxxiii. The reforming reign of Josiah, chap. xxxiv, xxxv. The ruining reigns of his sons, chap. xxxvi. Put all these together, and the truth of that word of God will appear, Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. The learned Mr. Whiston, in his Chronology, suggests, that the historical books which were written after the captivity, viz. The two books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, have more mistakes in names and numbers than all the books of the Old Testament besides, through the carelessness of transcribers: But though that should be allowed, the things are so very minute, that we may be confident, The foundation of God stands sure notwithstanding.*

## C H A P. I.

*In the close of the foregoing book we read how God magnified Solomon, and Israel obeyed him, God and Israel concurred to honour him. Now here we have an account, (1.) How he honoured God by sacrifice, ver. 1—6. and by prayer, ver. 7—12. (2.) How he honoured Israel, by increasing their strength, wealth and trade, ver. 13—17.*

**A**ND Solomon, the son of David, was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly.

2. Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains

of thousands; and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers. 3. So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon, for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. 4. But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim, to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. 5. Moreover, the brazen altar that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon



lomon and the congregation sought unto it. 6. And Solomon went up thither to the brazen altar before the LORD, which *was* at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it. 7. ¶ In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. 8. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead: 9. Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people, like the dust of the earth in multitude. 10. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, *that is so great*? 11. And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thy self, that thou mayst judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: 12. Wisdom and knowledge *is* granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour; such as none of the kings have had, that *have been* before thee; neither shall there any after thee have the like.

Here is, 1. Solomon's great prosperity, *ver. 1.* Though he had a contested title, yet God being with him, he was *strengthened in his kingdom*, his heart and hands were strengthened, and his interest in the people. God's presence will be our strength.

2. His great piety and devotion. His father was a prophet, a psalmist, and he kept mostly to the ark; but Solomon having read much in his bible concerning the tabernacle which Moses built, and the altars there, paid more respect to them than it should seem David had done. Both did well, and let neither be censured. If the zeal of one carried him out most to one instance of religion, and of another to the other instance, let them not judge or despise one another.

1. All his great men must thus far be good men, that they must join with him in worshipping God. He spake to the captains and judges, the governors and chief of the fathers to go with him to Gibeon; *ver. 2, 3.* Authority and interest is well bestowed on those that will thus use it for the glory of God; and the promoting of religion. It is duty to engage all that we have influence upon in the solemnities of religion, and very desirable to have many join with us in those solemnities; the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. Solomon began his reign with this publick pious visit to God's altar; and it was a very good omen. Magistrates are then likely to do well for themselves and their people, when they thus take God along with them at their setting out.

2. He offered abundance of sacrifices to God there, *ver. 6.* *a thousand burnt-offerings*, and, perhaps, a greater number of peace-offerings, on which he and his company *feasted before the Lord*. Where God sows plentifully; he expects to reap accordingly. His father David had left him flocks and herds in abundance; 1 *Chron. xxvii. 29, 31.* and thus he gave God his dues out of them. The ark was at Jerusalem, *ver. 4.* but the altar was at Gibeon, *ver. 5.* and thither he brought his sacrifices; for *it is the altar that sanctifieth every gift.*

3. He prayed a good prayer to God: this, with the answer to it, we had before, 1 *Kings iii. 5, &c.* (1.) God bid him ask what he would, not only that he might put him in the right way of obtaining the favours that were intended him, *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full*; but that he might try him how he stood affected, and might discover what was in his heart. Mens characters appear in their choices and desires. What wouldst thou have? tries a man as much as; What wouldst thou do? Whether he was one of the *children of this world*, that say, *Who will shew us any good?* or of the *children of light*, that say, *Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us.* As we choose, we shall have; and that is like to be our portion to which we give the preference, whether the wealth and pleasure of this world, or spiritual riches and delights. (2.) Like a genuine son of David, he chose spiritual blessings rather than temporal. His petition here is, *Give me wisdom and knowledge.* He owns those desirable gifts, and God the giver of them, *Prov. ii. 6.* God gave the faculty of understanding; and to him we must apply ourselves for the furniture of it. Two things are here pleaded which we had not in Kings: (1.) *Thou hast made me reign in my father's stead*, *ver. 6.* Lord, thou hast put me into this place, and therefore I can in faith ask of thee

grace to enable me to do the duty of it. What service we have reason to believe God calls us to, we have reason to hope he will qualify us for. But that is not all; Lord, thou hast put me into this place in the stead of David, that great and good man, that filled it up so well; therefore give me wisdom that Israel may not suffer damage by the change. Must I reign in my father's stead? Lord, give me my father's spirit. Note, The eminency of those that went before us, and the obligation that lies upon us to keep up and carry on the good work they were engaged in, should provoke us to a gracious emulation, and quicken our prayers to God for wisdom and grace, that we may do the work of God in our day, as faithfully and well as they did it in theirs. (2.) *Let thy promise to David my father be established*, *ver. 9.* He means the promise concerning his successor. In performance of that promise, *Lord, give me wisdom*: We do not find that wisdom was any of the things promised, but it was necessary in order to the accomplishment of what was promised, 2 *Sam. vii. 13, 14.* The promise was, *He shall build a house for my name, I will establish his throne, he shall be my son, and my mercy shall not depart from him.* Now, Lord, unless thou give me wisdom, thy house will not be built, nor my throne established; I shall carry it unbecoming my relation to thee as a Father, shall forfeit thy mercy and fool it away; therefore, *Lord, give me wisdom.* Note, 1. God's promises are our best pleas in prayer; *Remember thy word unto thy servant.* (2.) Children may take the comfort of the promises of that covenant which their parents in their baptism laid claim to, and took hold of for them. 3. The best way to obtain the benefit of the promises and privileges of the covenant, is to be earnest in prayer with God for wisdom and grace to do the duties of it.

4. He received a gracious answer to this prayer, *ver. 11, 12.* (1.) God gave him the wisdom that he asked for, because he asked for it: wisdom is a gift that God gives as freely and liberally as any gift, to those that value it, and wrestle for it, and will resolve to make use of it; and he upbraideth not the poor petitioners with their folly, *James i. 5.* God's grace shall never be wanting to those who sincerely desire to know and do their duty. (2.) God gave him the wealth and honour which he did not ask for, because he asked not for it. Those that pursue present things most earnestly, are most likely to miss of them; while those that refer themselves to the providence of God, if they have not the most of those things, have the most comfort in them. Those that make this world their end, come short of the other, and are disappointed in this too; but those that make the other world their end, shall not only obtain that, and full satisfaction in it, but shall take as much as is convenient of this world in their way.

13. ¶ Then Solomon came from his journey, to the high place that *was* at Gibeon, to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel. 14. And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot-cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. 15. And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycomore-trees that *are* in the vale for abundance. 16. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: and the kings merchants received the linen yarn at a price. 17. And they fetcht up, and brought forth out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so brought they out horses for all the kings of the Hittites; and for the kings of Syria; by their means.

Here is, 1. Solomon's entrance upon the government, *ver. 13.* he came from before the tabernacle, and reigned over Israel: He would not do any acts of government till he had done his acts of devotion; would not take honour to himself till he had given honour to God; first the tabernacle, and then the throne. But when he had obtained wisdom from God, he did not bury his talent, but as he had received the gift, ministered the same, did not give up himself to ease and pleasure, but minded business; he reigned over Israel.

2. The magnificence of his court, *ver. 14.* he gathered chariots and horsemen. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; for the king was forbid to multiply horses, *Deut. xvii. 16.* I do not remember that ever we find his good father in a chariot, or on horse-back; a mule was the highest he mounted. We should



should rather affect to excel those that went before us in good-  
ness than in grandeur.

3. The wealth and trade of his kingdom. He made silver and gold very cheap and common, *ver. 13.* The increase of gold lowers the value of it; but the increase of grace advanceth its price, the more men have of that the more they value it; *how much better therefore is it to get wisdom than gold?* He opened also a trade with Egypt, whence he imported horses, and linen-yarn, which he exported again to the kings of Syria, with great advantage, no doubt, *ver. 16, 17.* This we had before, *1 Kings x. 28, 29.* It is the wisdom of princes to promote industry, and encourage trade in their dominions. Perhaps Solomon took the hint of setting up the linen manufacture, bringing linen-yarn out of Egypt, working it into cloth, and then sending that to other nations, from what his mother taught him among the characters of the virtuous woman, *Prov. xxxi. 24.* That *she maketh fine linen and selleth it, and delivereth girdles of it to the merchant.* In all labour there is profit.

C H A P. II.

*Solomon's trading, which we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter, and the encouragement he gave both to merchandize and manufacture was very commendable. But building was the work he was designed for, and to that business he is here applying himself. Here is, (1.) Solomon's determination to build the temple and a royal palace, and his appointing of labourers to be employed herein, ver. 1, 2, 17, 18. (2.) His request to Hiram king of Tyre, to furnish him both with artists and materials, ver. 3—10. (3.) Hiram's obliging answer to, and compliance with his requests, ver. 11—16.*

1. **A**ND Solomon determined to build an house for the name of the LORD, and an house for his kingdom. 2. And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred to oversee them. 3. ¶ And Solomon sent to Hiram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein, *even so deal with me.* 4. Behold, I build an house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shew-bread, and for the burnt-offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new-moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel. 5. And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods. 6. But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him? 7. Send me now therefore a man, cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that are with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide. 8. Send me also cedar-trees, fir-trees, and algum-trees, out of Lebanon (for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon) and behold, my servants shall be with thy servants. 9. Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build, shall be wonderful great. 10. And behold, I will give thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oyl.

Solomon's wisdom was given him, not merely for speculation to entertain himself, (though it is indeed a princely entertainment) nor merely for conversation to entertain his friends, but for action, and therefore to action he presently applies himself. Observe,

1. His resolution within himself concerning his business, *ver. 1.* He determined to build, in the first place, a house for the name of the Lord. It is fit he that is the first, should be first served; first a temple, and then a palace; a house not so much for him-

self and his own convenience and magnificence, as for the kingdom, for the honour of it among its neighbours, and for the decent reception of the people, whenever they had occasion to apply themselves to their prince; so that in both, he aimed at the publick good. Those are the wisest men that lay out themselves most for the honour of the name of the Lord, and the welfare of communities; we are not born for ourselves, but for God and our country.

2. His embassy to Hiram, king of Tyre, to engage his assistance in the prosecution of his designs. The purport of his errand to him, is much the same here as we had it, *1 Kings v. 8.* only here it is more largely set forth.

1. The reasons why he makes this application to Hiram, are here more fully represented, for information to Hiram, as well as for inducement.

(1.) He pleads his father's interest in Hiram, and the kindness he had received from him, *ver. 3.* As thou didst deal with David, so deal with me. As we must shew kindness to, so we may expect kindness from our fathers friends, and with them should cultivate a correspondence.

(2.) He represents his design in building the temple: He intended it for a place of religious worship, *ver. 4.* that all the offerings which God had appointed for the honour of his name, might be offered up there. The house was built, that it might be dedicated to God, and used in his service; this we should aim at in all our business, that our havings and doings may be all to the glory of God. He mentions divers particular services that were there to be performed, for the instruction of Hiram. The mysteries of the true religion, unlike those of the Gentile superstition, coveted not concealment.

(3.) He endeavours to possess Hiram with very great and high thoughts of the God of Israel, by expressing the mighty veneration he had for his holy name. Great is our God above all gods, above all idols, above all princes, idols are nothing, princes are little, and both under the control of the God of Israel; and therefore, 1. The house must be great, not in proportion to the greatness of that God to whom it is to be dedicated, for between finite and infinite there can be no proportion, but in some proportion to the great value and esteem we have for this God. 2. Yet, be it never so great, it cannot be a habitation for the great God: Let not Hiram think that the God of Israel, like the gods of the nations, dwelt in temples made with hands, *Acts xvii. 24.* no, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. It is intended only for the convenience of his priests and worshippers, that they may have a fitting place wherein to burn sacrifice before him. 3. He looked upon himself, though a mighty prince, as unworthy the honour of being employed in this great work. Who am I, that I should build him a house? It becomes us to go about every work for God, with a due sense of our utter insufficiency for it, and our incapacity to do any thing adequate to the divine perfections. It is part of the wisdom, wherein we ought to walk towards them that are without, carefully to guard against all misapprehensions, which any thing we say or do may occasion, concerning God; so Solomon doth here in his treaty with Hiram.

2. The requests he makes to him are more particularly set down here. 1. He desires Hiram would furnish him with a good hand to work, *ver. 7.* send me a man. He had cunning men with him in Jerusalem and Judah, whom David provided, *1 Chron. xxii. 15.* Let them not think but that the Jews had some among them that were artists, but send me a man to direct them. There are ingenious men in Jerusalem, but not such engravers as are in Tyre, and therefore since temple work must be the best in its kind, let me have the best workman that can be got. 2. With good stuff to work on, *ver. 8.* Cedar, and other timber in abundance, *ver. 8, 9.* for the house must be wonderful great, i. e. very stately and magnificent, no cost must be spared, nor any contrivance wanting in it.

3. Here is Solomon's engagement to maintain the workmen, *ver. 10.* to give them so much wheat and barley, so much wine and oyl; he did not feed his workmen with bread and water, but with plenty, and every thing of the best. They that employ labourers ought to take care they be not only well paid, but well provided for, with sufficient of that which is wholesome and fitting for them. Let the rich masters do for their poor workmen, as they would be done by, if the tables were turned.

11. ¶ Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them. 12. Hiram said moreover, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wife son, endued with prudence and understanding, that might



might build an house for the LORD, and an house for his kingdom. 13. And now I have sent a cunning man (endued with understanding) of Hiram my fathers; 14. The son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson: also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father. 15. Now therefore the wheat, and the barley, the oyl, and the wine which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants: 16. And we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need, and we will bring it to thee in flotes, by sea to Joppa, and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem. 17. ¶ And Solomon numbred all the strangers that were in the land of Israel, after the numbring wherewith David his father had numbred them; and they were found an hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand and six hundred. 18. And he set threescore and ten thousand of them to be bearers of burthens, and fourscore thousand to be hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people a work.

Here is the return which Hiram made to Solomon's embassy, in which he shews a great respect for Solomon, and a readiness to serve him. Lesser people may learn of these great ones to be neighbourly and complaisant.

1. He congratulates the happiness of Israel, in having such a king as Solomon was, *ver. 11. Because the Lord loved his people, he has made thee king.* Note, A wise and good government is a great blessing to any people, and may well be accounted a singular token of God's favour. He doth not say, *Because he loved thee* (though that was true, 2 Sam. xii. 24.) *he made thee king*, but because he loved his people, princes must look upon themselves as preferred for the publick good, not for their own personal satisfaction, and should rule so, as to evidence they were given in love, and not in anger.

2. He blesteth God for raising up such a successor to David, *ver. 12.* It should seem, Hiram was not only very well affected to the Jewish nation, and well pleased with their prosperity, but that he was profelyted to the Jewish religion, and worshipped Jehovah, the God of Israel (who was now known by that name to the neighbour nations) as the God that made heaven and earth, and the fountain of power as well as being, for he sets up kings. Now the people of Israel kept close to the law and worship of God, and so preserved their honour, the neighbour nations were as willing to be instructed by them in the true religion, as they had been in the days of their apostasy, to be infected with the idolatries and superstitions of their neighbours. This made them high, that they lent to many nations, and did not borrow, lent truth to them, and did not borrow error from them; as when they did contrary, it was their shame.

3. He sent him a very ingenious curious workman, that would not fail to answer his expectations in every thing. One that had both Jewish and Gentile blood meeting in him, for his mother was an Israelite (Hiram thought she was of the tribe of Dan, and therefore faith so here, *ver. 14.* but it seems she was of the tribe of Naphtali, 1 Kings vii. 14.) but his father was a Tyrian; a good omen of uniting Jew and Gentile in the gospel-temple, as it was likewise, that the building of the second temple, was greatly furthered by Darius, (*Ezra. vi.*) who is supposed to have been the son of Esther, an Israelite by the mother's side.

4. He engaged for the timber, as much as he would have occasion for, and undertook to deliver it at Joppa; and withal, signified his dependence upon Solomon for the maintenance of the workmen, as he had promised, *ver. 15, 16.* This agreement we had, 1 Kings v. 8, 9.

2. The orders which Solomon gave about the workmen. He would not employ the free-born Israelites in the drudgery-work of the temple itself, nor so much as to be overseers of it, but in this he employed the strangers that were profelyted to the Jewish religion, who had not lands of inheritance in Canaan, as the Israelites had, and therefore applied themselves to trades, and got their living by their ingenuity and industry: A vast number of these there was at this time, (*ver. 17.*) who, if they were of any of the devoted nations, it is probably falling within the case, fell under the law of the Gibeonites, to be hewers of wood for the congregation: If not, yet being in many cases well provided for by the law of Moses, and put upon an equal foot with the native Israelites, they were bound in gratitude to do what

they could for the service of the temple; yet, no doubt, they were well paid, in money or money's worth; the law was, *Thou shalt not oppress a stranger.* The distribution of them we have here, *ver. 2.* and again, *ver. 18.* One hundred and fifty thousand in all. Canaan was a fruitful land that found meat for so many mouths, more than the numerous natives; and the temple a vast building, that found work for so many hands. But (Mr. Fuller thinks) that religious criticism, peculiar to this structure, of framing all before-hand, must needs encrease the work; I think, it rather left so much the more room, for this vast multitude of hands to be employed in it; for in the forest of Lebanon, they might all be at work together, without crowding one another, which they could not have been upon Mount Sion. And if there had not been such vast numbers employed, so large and curious a fabrick, which was begun and ended in seven years, might, for ought I know, have been as long in building as St. Paul's.

## C H A P. III.

*It was a much larger and more particular account of the building of the temple which we had in the book of Kings, than is here in this book of Chronicles. In this chapter we have, (1.) The place and time of building the temple, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The dimensions and rich ornaments of it, ver. 3—9. (3.) The cherubims in the most holy place, ver. 10—13. (4.) The vail, ver. 14. (5.) The two pillars, ver. 15—17. Of all which we have already had an account, 1 Kings vi.*

1. **T**HEN Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 2. And he began to build in the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign. 3. ¶ Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits. 4. And the porch that was in the front of the house, the length of it was according to the breadth of the house twenty cubits, and the height was an hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold. 5. And the greater house he cieled with fir-tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm-trees and chains. 6. And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold was gold of Parvaim. 7. He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof with gold, and graved cherubims on the walls. 8. And he made the most holy house, the length whereof was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold amounting to six hundred talents. 9. And the weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold: and he overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

Here is, 1. The place where the temple was built. Solomon was neither at liberty to choose, nor at a loss to fix the place; it was before determined, 1 Chron. xxii. 1. which was an ease to his mind. (1.) It must be at Jerusalem, for that was the place where God had chosen to put his name there; the royal city must be the holy city; there must be the testimony of Israel, for there are set the thrones of judgment, Psal. cxxii. 4, 5. (2.) It must be in mount Moriah, which some think was that very place in the land of Moriah, where Abraham offered Isaac, Gen. xxii. 2. So the Targum faith expressly, adding, *But he was delivered by the word of the Lord, and a ram provided in his place.* That was typical of Christ's sacrifice of himself; therefore fitly was the temple there built, which was likewise a type of him. (3.) It must be where the Lord appeared to David, and answered him by fire, 1 Chron. xxi. 18, 26. There atonement was made once, and therefore in remembrance of that, there atonement must still be made. There where God has met with me, it is to be hoped he will still. (4.) It must be in the place that David had prepared, not only which he had purchased with his money, but which he had pitched upon by divine direction. It was Solomon's wisdom, not to enquire out a more convenient place, but to acquiesce in the appointment of God, whatever might be objected against it. (5.) It must be in the threshing floor of Ornan, which, if (as a Jebusite) it gives encouragement to the Gentiles, yet it obligeth us to look upon temple work, as that



which requires the labour of the mind, no less than threshing work doth that of the body.

2. The time when it was begun; not till the fourth year of Solomon's reign, *ver. 2.* not that the three first years were trifled away, or spent in deliberating whether they should build the temple or no, but they were employed in the necessary preparations for it; wherein three years would be soon gone, considering how many hands were to be got together, and set to work. Some conjecture that this year was a sabbatical year, or year of release and rest to the land, when the people being discharged from their husbandry, might more easily lend a hand to the beginning of this work, and then the year it was finished, would fall out to be another sabbatical year, when they would likewise have leisure to attend the solemnity of the dedication of it.

3. The dimensions of it, in which Solomon was instructed, (*ver. 3.*) as he was in other things by his father. *This was the foundation* (so it may be read) *which Solomon laid for the building of the house*: This was the rule he went by, so many cubits the length and breadth after the first measure, *i. e.* according to the measure that was first fixed, which there was no reason to make any alteration of, when the work came to be done; for the dimensions were given by divine wisdom, and *what God doth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it or taken from it*, Eccl. iii. 14. His first measure will be the last.

4. The ornaments of the temple, wherewith it was garnished: The timber work was very fine, and yet within it was overlaid with pure gold, *ver. 4.* with *fine gold*, *ver. 5.* and that embossed with *palm trees and chains*. It was gold of *Parvaim*, *ver. 6.* the best gold. The beams and posts, the walls and doors were overlaid with gold, *ver. 7.* The most holy place, which was ten yards square, was all overlaid with fine gold, *ver. 8.* even the upper chambers, or rather the upper floor or roof; top and bottom, and sides, were all overlaid with gold. Every nail or screw, or pin, with which the golden plates were fastened to the walls that were overlaid with them, weighed fifty shekels, or were worth so much, workmanship and all. A great many precious stones were dedicated to God, *1 Chron. xxix. 2, 8.* and these were set here and there, where they would shew to the best advantage. The finest houses now pretend to no better garnishing than good paint, on the roof and walls, but the ornaments of the temple were more substantially rich; it was set with precious stones, because it was a type of the new Jerusalem, which has therefore no temple in it, because it is all temple, and the walls, gates, and foundations of which, are said to be of precious stones and pearls, *Rev. xxi. 18, 19, 21.*

10. And in the most holy house he made two cherubims of image-work, and overlaid them with gold.

11. ¶ And the wings of the cherubims were twenty cubits long: one wing of the one cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing was likewise five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub. 12. And one wing of the other cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing was five cubits also, joining to the wing of the other cherub. 13. The wings of the cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward. 14. ¶ And he made the vail of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon. 15. Also he made before the house two pillars of thirty and five cubits high, and the chapiter that was on the top of each of them was five cubits. 16. And he made chains, as in the oracle, and put them on the heads of the pillars, and made an hundred pomegranates, and put them on the chains. 17. And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand, Jachin, and the name of that on the left, Boaz.

Here is, 1. An account of the two cherubims, which were set up in the holy of holies. There were two already over the ark, which covered the mercy-seat with their wings, those were small ones. Now the most holy place was enlarged, though those were continued, being appurtenances of the ark, which was not to be made new as all the other utensils of the tabernacle were, yet those two large ones were added, doubtless, by divine appointment, to fill up the holy place; which otherwise would look bare, like a room unfurnished. These cherubims are said to be of image-work, *ver. 10.* designed, it is likely, to represent the angels, who attend the divine Majesty. Each wing extended five cubits, so that the whole was twenty cubits, *ver. 12, 13.* which was just the breadth of the most holy place, *ver. 8.*

They stood on their feet as servants, their faces inwards towards the ark, *ver. 13.* that it might appear they were not set there to be adored, for then they would have been sitting as on a throne, and their faces towards their worshippers, but rather as themselves attendants on the invisible God. We must not worship angels, but we must worship with angels, for we are come into communion with them, *Heb. xii. 22.* and must do the will of God as the angels do it. This will help to possess us with reverence of God in all our approaches to him, that we are worshipping him before whom the angels cover their faces. Compare *1 Cor. xi. 10.* with *Isa. vi. 2.*

2. The vail that parted between the temple and the most holy place, *ver. 14.* This noted the darkness of that dispensation, and the distance which the worshippers were kept at; but at the death of Christ this vail was rent, for through him we are made nigh, and have boldness not only to look, but to enter into the holiest. On this he wrought cherubims, *Heb. He caused them to ascend*, *i. e.* they were made in raised work; embossed. Or, he made them on the wing in an ascending posture; as the other two that stood on their feet in an attending posture, to mind the worshippers to lift up their hearts, and to soar upwards in their devotions.

3. The two pillars which were set up before the temple. Both together were somewhat above thirty five cubits in length, *ver. 15.* about eighteen cubits high apiece, *1 Kings vii. 15, &c.* we there took a view of those pillars, Jachin and Boaz, establishment and strength in temple work, and by it.

#### CHAP. IV.

We have here a further account of the furniture of God's house.

(1.) Those things that were of brass. The altar for burnt-offerings, *ver. 1.* The sea and lavers to hold water, *ver. 2—6.* The plates with which the doors of the court were overlaid, *ver. 9.* The vessels of the altar, and other things, *ver. 10—18.* (2.) Those that were of gold; The candlesticks and tables, *ver. 7, 8.* The altar of incense, *ver. 19.* and the appurtenances of each of these, *ver. 20—22.* All these, except the brazen altar, *ver. 1.* were accounted for more largely, *1 Kings vii. 23, &c.*

1. **M**oreover, he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof. 2. ¶ Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof, and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. 3. And under it was the similitude of oxen, which did compass it round about: ten in a cubit compassing the sea round about. Two rows of oxen were cast, when it was cast. 4. It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. 5. And the thickness of it was an hand-breadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of the cup, with flowers of lilies; and it received and held three thousand baths. 6. ¶ He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them: such things as they offered for the burnt-offerings, they washed in them; but the sea was for the priests to wash in. 7. And he made ten candlesticks of gold according to their form, and set them in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left. 8. He made also tables, and placed them in the temple, five on the right side, and five on the left: and he made an hundred basins of gold. 9. ¶ Furthermore, he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid the doors of them with brass. 10. And he set the sea on the right side of the east end, over against the south.

David often speaks with much affection, both of the house of the Lord, and of the courts of our God: both without doors and within, there was that which typified the grace of the gospel, and shadowed out good things to come, of which the substance is Christ.

1. There were those things in the open court in the view of all the people which were very significant.

(1.) There was the brazen altar, *ver. 1.* The making of this was not mentioned in the Kings. On this all the sacrifices were



were offered, and it sanctified the gift. This altar was four times as large as that which Moses made in the tabernacle; that was five cubits square, this was twenty cubits square. Now Israel was become both more numerous and more rich, and it was to be hoped more devout, (for every age should aim to be wiser and better than that which went before it;) it was expected that there would be greater plenty of offerings brought to God's altar than had been; it is therefore made such a capacious scaffold that it might hold them all, and none might excuse themselves from bringing those testimonies of their devotion, with this, that there was not room to receive them. God had greatly enlarged their borders, it was therefore fit that they should enlarge his altars. Our returns should bear some proportion to our receivings. It was ten cubits high, so that the people, who worshipped in the courts, might see the sacrifices burnt, and their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for sin; It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not thus consumed, and that this is accepted as an expiation of my guilt. They might thus be led to consider the great sacrifice which should be offered in the fulness of time, to take away sin, and abolish death, which the blood of bulls and goats could not possibly do. And with the smoke of the sacrifices, their hearts might ascend to heaven in holy desires towards God, and his favour. In all our devotions we must keep the eye of faith fixed upon Christ, the great propitiation. How they went up to this altar, and carried the sacrifices up to it, we are not told; some think by a plain ascent like a hill: If by steps, doubtless they were so contrived, as that the end of that law might be answered, *Exod. xx. 26. That thy nakedness be not discovered.*

(2.) There was the molten sea. A very large brass pan, in which they put water for the priests to wash in, *ver. 1, 6.* it was put just at the entrance into the court of the priests, like the font at the church door. If it were filled to the brim, it would hold three thousand baths, as here, *ver. 5.* but ordinarily there were but two thousand in it, *1 Kings vii. 26.* The holy Ghost by this signified, (1.) Our great gospel privilege, that the *blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*, *1 John i. 7.* To us there is a fountain opened for all believers, who are spiritual priests, *Rev. i. 5, 6.* nay, for *all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to wash in*, from sin, which is uncleanness. There is a fulness of merit in Jesus Christ, for all those that by faith apply themselves to him for the purifying of their consciences, that they may *serve the living God*, *Heb. ix. 14.* (2.) Our great gospel duty, which is to cleanse ourselves by true repentance from all the pollutions of the flesh, and the corruption that is in the world. Our hearts must be sanctified, or we cannot sanctify the name of God. They that draw nigh to God must *cleanse their hands*, and *purify their hearts*, *Jam. iv. 8.* If *I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*, and he that is washed still needs to *wash his feet*, to renew his repentance whenever he goes in to minister, *John xiii. 10.*

(3.) There were ten lavers of brass, in which they washed such things as they offered for the burnt-offerings, *ver. 6.* As the priests must be washed, so must the sacrifices: We must not only purify ourselves in preparation for our religious performances, but carefully put away all those vain thoughts, and corrupt aims which cleave to our performances themselves, and pollute them.

(4.) The doors of the court were over-laid with brass, *ver. 9.* both for strength and beauty, and that they might not be rotted with the weather, to which they were exposed. *Gates of brass* we read of *Psal. cvii. 16.*

2. There were those things in the house of the Lord, into which the priests only went in to minister, that were very significant. All was of gold there; the nearer we come to God, the purer we must be, the purer we shall be.

1. There were ten golden candlesticks, according to the form of that one which was in the tabernacle, *ver. 7.* The written word is a lamp and a light, shining in a dark place. In Moses's time they had but one candlestick, the Pentateuch, but the additions, which, in process of time, were to be added of other books of scripture, might be signified by this increase of the number of the candlesticks. Light was growing. The candlesticks are the churches, *Rev. i. 20.* Moses set up but one, the church of the Jews; but in the gospel temple, not only believers but churches are multiplied.

2. There were ten golden tables, *ver. 8.* Tables whereon the shew-bread was set, *ver. 19.* Perhaps every one of the tables had twelve loaves of shew-bread on it; as the house was enlarged, the house-keeping was; *In my Father's house there is bread enough* for the whole family. To those tables belonged an hundred golden basons, or dishes; for God's table is well furnished.

3. There was a golden altar, *ver. 19.* on which they burnt incense. It is likely, this was enlarged in proportion to the brazen altar. Christ, that once for all made atonement for sin, ever lives making intercession in the virtue of that atonement.

11. And Hiram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basons, and Hiram finished the work that he was to make for king Solomon for the house of God: 12. *To wit*, the two pillars, and pommels, and the chapters which were on the top of the two pillars, and two wreaths to cover the two pommels of the chapters which were on the top of the pillars: 13. And four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths; two rows of pomegranates on each wreath, to cover the two pommels of the chapters, which were upon the pillars. 14. He made also bases; and lavers made he upon the bases; 15. One sea, and twelve oxen under it: 16. The pots also and the shovels, and the flesh-hooks, and all their instruments, did Hiram his father make to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, of bright brass. 17. In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay-ground, between Succoth and Zeredathah. 18. Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out. 19. ¶ And Solomon made all the vessels that were for the house of God, the golden altar also, and the tables whereon the shew-bread was set; 20. Moreover, the candlesticks with their lamps, that they should burn after the manner, before the oracle, of pure gold; 21. And the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs made be of gold, and that perfect gold. 22. And the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers, of pure gold: and the entry of the house, the inner doors thereof for the most holy place, and the doors of the house of the temple, were of gold.

We have here such a summary, both of the brass work and of the gold work of the temple, as we had before, *1 Kings vii. 13, &c.* in which we have nothing more to observe here, but, (1.) That Hiram the workman was very punctual. *He finished all that he was to make*, *ver. 11.* and left no part of his work undone. *Hiram his father* he is called, *ver. 16.* Probably, it was a sort of a nick-name by which he was commonly known, Father Hiram; for the king of Tyre called him *Hiram Abi*, My father; in compliance with whom Solomon called him his; he being a great artist, and father of the artificers in brass and iron. He acquitted himself very well, both for ingenuity and industry. (2.) Solomon was very generous. He made *all the vessels in great abundance*, *ver. 18.* many of a sort, that many hands might be employed, and so the work might go on with expedition; or that some might be laid up for use when others were wore out. Freely he has received, and he will freely give; when he had made vessels enow for the present, he would not convert the remainder of the brass to his own use; it is devoted to God, and it shall be used for him.

## CHAP. V.

The temple being built and furnished for God, we have here, (1.) Possession given to him, by bringing in the dedicated things, *ver. 1.* but especially the ark, the token of his presence, *ver. 2—10.* (2.) Possession taken by him, in a cloud, *ver. 11—14.* For if any man open the door of his heart to God, he will come in, *Rev. iii. 20.*

1. **T**HUS all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD, was finished: and Solomon brought in all the things, that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and gold, and all the instruments put he among the treasures of the house of God. 2. ¶ Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD, out of the city of David, which is Zion. 3. Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast, which was in the seventh month. 4. And all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark. 5. And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up. 6. Also king Solomon



Solomon and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep, and oxen, which could not be told nor numbred for multitude. 7. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. 8. For the cherubims spread forth *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof, above. 9. And they drew out the staves of the ark, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle, but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day. 10. *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put *therein* at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

This agrees with what we had, 1 Kings viii. 2; &c. where an account was given of the solemn introducing of the ark into the new-erected temple.

1. There needed no great solemnity for the bringing in of the dedicated things, *ver. 1.* They added to the wealth, and perhaps were so disposed as to add the beauty of it, but they could not add to the holiness; for it was the temple that sanctifieth the gold, Matth. xxiii. 17. See how just Solomon was both to God and to his father; whatever David had dedicated to God, though he had never so much mind to it himself, he would by no means alienate it, but put it among the treasures of the temple. Those children that would inherit their godly parents blessing, must religiously pursue their pious intentions, and not defeat them. When Solomon had made all the vessels of the temple in abundance, chap. iv. 18. there was a great deal of the materials left, which he would not convert to any other use, but laid it up in the treasury, for a time of need. Dedicated things must not be alienated. It is sacrilege to do it.

2. But it was fit the ark should be brought in with great solemnity, and so it was. All the other vessels were made new, and bigger in proportion to the house than they had been in the tabernacle; but the ark with the mercy-seat and the cherubims were the same; for the presence and grace of God, is the same in little assemblies that it is in large ones, in the poor condition of the church, that it is in its prosperous estate; wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name, there is he as truly present with them, as if there were two or three thousand. The ark was brought in attended by a great assembly of the elders of Israel, who came to grace the solemnity, and a very sumptuous appearance, no doubt, they made, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* It was carried by the priests, *ver. 7.* brought into the most holy place, and put under the wings of the great cherubims which Solomon had set up there, *ver. 7, 8.* There they are unto this day; not the day when this book was written after the captivity, but when that was written out of which this story was transcribed. Or, they were there (so it might better be read) unto this day, the day of Jerusalem's desolations, that fatal day, *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* The ark was a type of Christ, and as such a token of the presence of God; that gracious promise, *Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world,* doth in effect bring the ark into our religious assemblies, if we by faith and prayer put that promise in suit, and this we should be most solicitous and earnest for, *Lord, if thy presence go not up with us,* wherefore should we go up? The temple itself, if Christ leave it, is a desolate place, *Matt. xxiii. 38.*

3. With the ark they brought up the tabernacle, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, *ver. 5.* They were not alienated, because they had been dedicated to God; not altered or melted down for the new work, because there was no need of them; but they were carefully laid up as monuments of antiquity, and as many of the vessels as were fit for use, it is likely, were still used.

4. This was done with great joy. They kept a holy feast upon the occasion, *ver. 3.* and sacrificed sheep and oxen without number, *ver. 6.* Note, 1. The establishment of the public worship of God, according to his institution, and with the tokens of his presence, is and ought to be matter of great joy to any people. 2. When Christ is formed in a soul, the law written in the heart, the ark of the covenant settled there, so that it becomes the temple of the holy Ghost, there is true satisfaction in that soul. 3. Whatever we have the comfort of we must by the sacrifices of praise give God the glory of, and not be straitened therein; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. If God favour us with his presence, we must honour him with our services, the best we have.

11. ¶ And it came to pass when the priests were come out of the holy place (for all the priests that were

present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course. 12. Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons, and their brethren; being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests, sounding with trumpets) 13. It came even to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lift up *their* voice with their trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; 14. So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

Solomon and the elders of Israel, had done what they could to grace the solemnity of the introduction of the ark; but God, by testifying his acceptance of what they did, put the greatest honour upon it. The cloud of glory that filled the house, beautified it more than all the gold, with which it was over-laid, or the precious stones with which it was garnished, and yet that was no glory in comparison with the glory of the gospel-dispensation, 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9, 10. Observe,

1. How God took possession of the temple; he filled it with a cloud, *ver. 13.* (1.) Thus he signified his acceptance of this temple to be the same to him, that the tabernacle of Moses was, and assured them, that he would be the same in it; for it was by a cloud that he made his publick entry into that, *Exod. xl. 34.* (2.) Thus he considered the weakness and infirmity of those to whom he manifested himself, who could not bear the dazzling lustre of the divine light, it would have over powered them, he therefore spreads a cloud upon it, *Job xxvi. 9.* Christ revealed things to his disciples as they were able to bear them, and in parables, which wrapped up divine things as in a cloud. (3.) Thus he would affect all that worshipped in his courts with holy reverence and fear. Christ's disciples were afraid when they entered into a cloud, *Luke ix. 34.* (4.) Thus he would intimate the darkness of that dispensation, by reason of which, they could not stedfastly look to the end of those things that are now abolished, 2 Cor. iii. 13.

2. When he took possession of it. (1.) When the priests were come out of the holy place, *ver. 11.* This is the way of giving possession: All must come out that the rightful owner may come in. Would we have God dwell in our hearts; we must leave room for him; let every thing else give way. We are here told, that upon this occasion, the whole family of the priests attended, and not any one particular course; all the priests that were present were sanctified, *ver. 11.* because there was work enough for them all, when such a multitude of sacrifices were to be offered, and because it was fit they should all be eye-witnesses of this solemnity, and receive the impressions of it. (2.) When the singers and musicians praised God, then the house was filled with a cloud. This is very observable; it was not when they offered sacrifices, but when they sang the praises of God, that God gave them this token of his favour; for the sacrifice of praise pleaseth the Lord better than that of an ox or bullock, *Psal. lxxix. 31.* All the singers and musicians were employed, those of each of the three families; and to compleat the consort, one hundred and twenty priests with their trumpets joined with them, all standing at the east-end of the altar, on that side of the court which lay outmost towards the people, *ver. 12.* And when this part of the service began, the glory of God appeared. Observe, 1. It was when they were unanimous, when they were as one, to make one sound. The holy Ghost descended on the apostles, when they met with one accord, *Acts ii. 1.* Where unity is, the Lord commands the blessing. 2. It was, when they were lively and hearty, and lift up their voice to praise the Lord: Then we serve God acceptably, when we are fervent in spirit, serving him. 3. It was when they were in their praises celebrating the everlasting mercy and goodness of God. As there is no one saying more often repeated in scripture than this, *his mercy endureth for ever;* (it is twenty-six times in one psalm, (*Psal. cxxxvi.*) and often elsewhere) so there is none more signally owned from heaven, for it was not the expression of some rapturous flights that the priests were singing when the glory of God appeared, but this plain song, *he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.* Which should make us in love with those words. God's goodness is his glory, and he is pleased when we give him the glory of it.

3. What was the effect of it? The priests themselves could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, *ver. 14.* which, as it was an evidence that the law made men priests that had infirmity, so (as bishop Patrick observes) it was a plain intimation



mation that the Levitical priesthood should cease, and stand no longer to minister, when the Messiah should come, in whom *the fulness of the Godhead should dwell bodily*. In him the glory of God dwelt among us, but covered with a cloud; the word was made flesh, and when he comes to his temple, like a refiner's fire, *who may abide the day of his coming?* and *who shall stand when he appeareth?* Mal. iii. 1, 2.

## C H A P. VI.

*The glory of the Lord, in the vehicle of a thick cloud, having filled the house which Solomon built, by which God manifested his presence there, he presently lays hold on the opportunity, and addresseth himself to God, as a God now in a peculiar manner nigh at hand. (1.) He makes a solemn declaration of his intent and meaning in the building this house, to the satisfaction of the people, and the honour of God, both which he blessed, ver. 1—11. (2.) He makes a solemn prayer to God, that he would please graciously to accept and answer all the prayers that should be made in or towards that house, ver. 12, 42. This whole chapter we had before with very little variation, 1 Kings viii. 12—53. to which it may not be amiss here to look back.*

1. **T**HEN said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. 2. But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever. 3. And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel (and all the congregation of Israel stood) 4. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled *that* which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying, 5. Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build an house in, that my name might be there, neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel: 6. But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there, and have chosen David to be over my people Israel: 7. Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 8. But the LORD said to my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart: 9. Notwithstanding, thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name. 10. The LORD therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 11. And in it have I put the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, that he made with the children of Israel.

It is of great consequence in all our religious actions that we design well, and that our eye be single. If Solomon had built this temple in the pride of his heart, as Ahasuerus made his feast, only to *shew the riches of his kingdom, and the honour of his majesty*, it would not have turned at all to his account. But he here declares upon what inducements he undertook it, and they are such as not only justify, but magnify the undertaking.

1. He did it for the glory and honour of God; this was his highest and ultimate end in it. It was *for the name of the Lord God of Israel*, ver. 10. to be a house of habitation for him, ver. 2. He has indeed, as to us, *made darkness his pavilion*, ver. 1. but let this house be the residence of that darkness; for it is in the upper world that he dwells in light, such as no eye can approach.

2. He did it in compliance with the choice God had been pleased to make of Jerusalem, to be the city in which he would record his name, ver. 6. *I have chosen Jerusalem*. A great many stately buildings there were in Jerusalem for the king; his princes, and the royal family: If God choose that place, it is fit there be a building for him; which may excel all the rest. Were men thus honoured there; let God be thus honoured.

3. He did it in pursuance of his father's good intentions, which he never had an opportunity to put in execution. *It was in the* No. 30.

*heart of David my father to build a house for God; the project was his, be it known to his honour, ver. 7. and God approved of it, though he permitted him not to put it in execution, ver. 8. Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.* Temple-work is often thus done, one sows, and another reaps, *John* iv. 37, 38. One age begins that which the next brings to perfection; and let not the wisest of men think it any disparagement to them to pursue the good designs which those that went before them have laid, and to build upon their foundation. Every good piece is not an original.

4. He did it in performance of the word which God had spoken. God had said, *Thy son shall build the house for my name*, and now I have done it, ver. 9, 10. The service was appointed him, and the honour of it designed him by the divine promise; so that he did not do it of his own head, but was called of God to it. He that appoints the work, it is fit he should have the appointing of the workmen; and those may go on in their work with great satisfaction, who see their call to it clear.

12. ¶ And he stood before the altar of the LORD; in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands; 13. (For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court, and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands towards heaven) 14. And said, O LORD God of Israel, *there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and shewest mercy unto thy servants; that walk before thee with all their hearts:* 15. Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father, that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day: 16. Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying; *There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so, that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me:* 17. Now then, O LORD God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David. 18. (But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!) 19. Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee: 20. That thine eyes may be opened upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said, that thou wouldst put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer, which thy servant prayeth towards this place. 21. Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make towards this place: hear thou from thy dwelling-place, *even* from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive. 22. ¶ If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: 23. Then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head, and by justifying the righteous, by giving him according to his righteousness. 24. ¶ And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; and shall return and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication before thee in this house: 25. Then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sins of thy people Israel; and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them, and to their fathers. 26. ¶ When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; yet if they pray towards this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them: 27. Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance. 28. ¶ If there be dearth in



the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars; if their enemies besiege them in the cities of their land; whatsoever sore, or whatsoever sickness *there be*: 29. Then what prayer, or supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house: 30. Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men) 31. That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. 32. ¶ Moreover, concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great names sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray in this house: 33. Then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as *doth* thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built, is called by thy name. 34. If thy people go out to war against their enemies, by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: 35. Then hear thou from the heavens their prayer, and their supplication, and maintain their cause. 36. If they sin against thee (for *there is no man* which sinneth not) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before *their* enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near: 37. Yet, *if* they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn, and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; 38. If they return to thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their captivity, whether they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land which thou gavest unto their fathers, and *toward* the cities which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: 39. Then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee. 40. Now, my God, let (I beseech thee) thine eyes be open, and *let* thine ears *be* attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place. 41. Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. 42. O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant.

Solomon had in the foregoing verses, signed and sealed (as it were) the deed of dedication, by which the temple was appropriated to the honour and service of God; now here he prays the consecration prayer, by which it was made a figure of Christ, the great mediator through whom we are to offer all our prayers, and to expect all God's favours, and to whom we are to have an eye in every thing wherein we have to do with God.

We opened the particulars of this prayer, 1 Kings viii. and therefore shall now only glean up some few passages in it, which may be the proper subjects of our meditation.

1. Here are some doctrinal truths occasionally laid down. As, (1.) That the God of Israel is a being of incomparable perfection. We cannot describe him; but this we know, there is *not like him in heaven or earth*, ver. 14. All the creatures have their fellow-creatures; but the Creator has not his peer: He is infinitely above all, and *not all God blessed for ever*. (2.) That he is, and will be true to every word that he hath spoken, and all that serve him in sincerity, shall certainly find him both faithful and kind. Those that set God always before them, and *walk before him with all their hearts*, shall find him as good as his word, and better; he will both keep covenant with them, and shew mercy to them, ver. 14. (3.) That he is a being infinite and immense, whom the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain, and to whose felicity nothing is added, by the utmost we can do in his service, ver. 18. He is

infinitely beyond the bounds of the creation, and infinitely above the praises of all intelligent creatures. (4.) That he, and *he only knows the hearts of the children of men*, ver. 30. All mens thoughts, aims and affections are naked and open before him, and however the imaginations and intents of our hearts may be concealed from men, angels, and devils, they cannot be hid from God, who knows not only what is in the heart, but the heart itself, and all the beatings of it. (5.) That there is no such thing as a sinless perfection to be found in this life, ver. 36. *There is no man that sinneth not*; nay, which *doth good and sinneth not*; so he writes agreeable to what he here saith, Eccl. vii. 20.

2. Here are some suppositions, or cases put, which are to be taken notice of. (1.) He supposeth that if doubts and controversies arose between man and man, both sides would agree to appeal to God, and to lay an oath upon the person whose testimony must decide the matter, ver. 22. The religious reverence of an oath, as it was ancient, so it may be presumed it will continue, as long as there are any remains of conscience and right reason among men. (2.) He supposeth though now Israel enjoyed a profound peace and tranquillity, that troublesome times would come; he did not think the mountain of their prosperity stood so strong but that it might be moved; nay, he expected sin would move it. (3.) He supposeth that those who had not called upon God at other times, yet in their affliction would seek him early, and earnestly. When they are in distress they will confess their sins, and confess thy name, and make supplication to thee. Trouble will drive those to God that had said to him depart, ver. 24, 26, 28. (4.) He supposeth that strangers would come from afar to worship the God of Israel, and to pay homage to him; and this also might reasonably be expected, considering what worthless things the gods of the nations were, and what proofs the God of Israel had given of his being Lord of the whole earth.

3. Here are petitions very pertinent.

1. That God would own this house, and have an eye to it, as the place of which he had said he would put his name there, ver. 20. He could not in faith have asked God to shew such peculiar favour to this house above any other, if he himself had not said it should be his rest for ever. The prayer that will speed, must be warranted by the word. We may therefore with humble confidence pray to God to be well pleased with us in Jesus Christ, because he has declared himself well pleased in him; *this is my beloved son*; but faith not now of any house, this is my beloved place.

2. That God would hear and accept the prayers which should be made in, or towards that place, ver. 21. He asks not that God should help them unless they prayed for themselves; but that God would help them in answer to their prayers: Even Christ's intercessions do not supersede, but encourage our supplications. He prays that God would hear from his dwelling-place, even from heaven; that is his dwelling-place still; not this temple; and thence help must come.

*And when thou hearest forgive.* Note, The forgiveness of one sin is that which makes way for all the other answers to our prayers, *removendo prohibens*.

3. That God would give judgment according to equity, upon all the appeals that should be made to him, ver. 23, 30. This we may in faith pray for, for we are sure it shall be done; God sitteth in the throne judging right.

4. That God would return in mercy to his people, when they repented and reformed, and sought unto him, ver. 25, 27, 38, 39. This we also may in faith pray for, building upon the repeated declarations God has made of his readiness to accept penitents.

5. That God would bid the strangers welcome to this house, and answer their prayers, ver. 33. for if there be in duty, why should not there be in privilege, one law for the stranger, and one born in the land, Lev. xxiv. 22.

6. That God would upon all occasions, own and plead the cause of his people Israel, against all the opposers of it, ver. 35. *maintain their cause*; and again, ver. 39. If they be the Israel of God, their cause is the cause of God, and he will espouse it.

Lastly, He concludes this prayer with some expressions, which he had learnt of his good father, and borrowed from one of his psalms. We had them not in the Kings, but here we have them, ver. 41, 42. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, and how can we express ourselves in better language to God, than that of his own spirit? But these words were in a special manner of use to direct Solomon, because they had reference to this very work that he was now doing. We have them, Psal. cxxxii. 8, 9, 10. He prays, (ver. 41.)

1. That God would take possession of the temple, and keep posses-



possession; that he would make it his place, his resting place. Thou and the ark; what will the ark do without the God of the ark! ordinances without the God of the ordinances! 2. That he would make the ministers of the temple publick blessings, *clothe them with salvation*, i. e. not only save them, but make them instrumental to save others, by offering the sacrifices of righteousness. 3. That the service of the temple might turn abundantly to the joy and satisfaction of all the Lord's people. *Let thy saints rejoice in goodness*, i. e. in the *goodness of thy house*, *Psal. lxxv.* 4. Let all that come hither to worship, like the Eunuch, go away rejoicing. He pleads two things, *ver. 42.* (1.) His own relation to God; *Turn not away the face of thine anointed*: Lord, thou hast appointed me to be king, and wilt not thou own me? (2.) God's covenant with his father. *Remember the mercies of David thy servant.* The piety of David towards God, so some understand it, and so the word sometimes signifies, his pious care of the ark, and concern for it. See *Psal. cxxxii.* 1, 2, &c. Or, the promises of God to David, which were mercies to him, his great support and comforts in all his troubles. We may plead as Solomon doth here, with an eye to Christ. We deserve that God should turn away our face, that he should reject us and our prayers, but we come in the name of the Lord Jesus, *thine anointed, thy Messiah*, so the word is, thy Christ; so the Seventy. Him thou hearest always, and wilt never turn away his face. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, but Lord remember, *the mercies of David thy servant.* Christ is God's servant, *Isa. xlii.* 1. and is called David, *Hos. iii.* 5. Lord, remember his merits, and accept of us on the account of them. Remember his tender concern for his Father's honour, and man's salvation, *as what he did and suffered from that principle.* Remember the promises of the everlasting covenant, which free grace has made to us in Christ, and which are called the sure mercies of David, *Isa. lv.* 3. and *Acts xiii.* 34. This must be all our desire, and all our hope, all our prayer, and all our plea, for it is all our salvation.

## C H A P. VII.

*In this chapter we have God's answer to Solomon's prayer. (1.) His publick answer by fire from heaven, which consumed the sacrifices, ver. 1. with which the priests and people were much affected, ver. 2, 3. and by that token of God's acceptance were encouraged to continue the solemnities of the feast for fourteen days, and Solomon was encouraged to pursue all his designs for the honour of God, ver. 4—11. (2.) His private answer by word of mouth, in a dream or vision of the night, ver. 12—22. Most of these things we had before, 1 Kings viii. and ix.*

1. **N**OW when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. 2. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. 3. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. 4. ¶ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. 5. And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. 6. And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry: and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood. 7. Moreover, Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings, because the brazen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt-offerings, and the meat-offerings, and the fat. 8. ¶ And at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath, unto the river of Egypt. 9. And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly; for

they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days. 10. And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month, he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had shewed unto David and to Solomon, and to Israel his people. 11. Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomons heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

Here is, 1. The gracious return which God immediately made to Solomon's prayer. The fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, *ver. 1.* In this way God testified his acceptance of Moses, *Lev. ix. 24.* of Gideon, *Judg. vi. 21.* of David, *1 Chron. xxi. 26.* of Elijah, *1 Kings xviii. 38.* and in general, to accept the burnt-sacrifice, is in the Hebrew phrase, to turn it to ashes, *Psal. xx. 3.* The fire came down here not upon the killing of the sacrifices, but the praying of the prayer. This fire spake God, (1.) Glorious in himself, for *our God is a consuming fire*, terrible even in his holy places. This fire breaking forth (as it is probable) out of the thick darkness, made it the more terrible, as on mount Sinai, *Exod. xxiv. 16, 17.* The sinners in Sion had reason to be afraid at this sight, and to say, *who among us shall dwell near this devouring fire?* *Isa. xxxiii. 14.* And yet, (2.) Gracious to Israel; for this fire which might justly have consumed them, fastened upon the sacrifice which was offered in their stead, and consumed that, by which God signified to them, that he accepted their offerings, and that his anger was turned away from them. Let us apply this, 1. To the suffering of Christ; when it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief, in that he shewed his good will to men, having laid on him the iniquity of all. His death was our life, and he was made sin and a curse, that we might inherit righteousness and a blessing. That sacrifice was consumed, that we might escape; *Here am I, let these go their way.* (2.) To the sanctification of the Spirit, who descended like fire, burning up our lusts and corruptions, those beasts that must be sacrificed, or we are undone; and kindling in our souls a holy fire of pious and devout affections, always to be kept burning on the altar of the heart. The surest evidence of God's acceptance of our prayers, is the descent of this holy fire upon us, *Did not our hearts burn within us?* *Luke xxiv. 32.* And as a farther evidence that God accepted Solomon's prayer; still *the glory of the Lord filled the house.* The heart that is thus filled with a holy awe and reverence of the divine glory, to which God manifests himself in his greatness, and (which is no less his glory) in his goodness, is thereby owned as a living temple.

2. The grateful return made to God for this gracious token of his favour.

(1.) The people worshipped and praised God, *ver. 3.* When they saw the fire of God come down from heaven thus, they did not run away in a fright, but kept their ground in the courts of the Lord, and took occasion from it, 1. With reverence to adore the glory of God; they bowed their faces to the ground, and worshipped, thus expressing their awful dread of the divine Majesty, their cheerful submission to the divine authority, and the sense they had of their unworthiness to come into his presence, and their inability to stand before the power of his wrath. 2. With thankfulness to acknowledge the goodness of God; even then when the fire of the Lord came down, yet they praised him, saying, *For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.* That is a song never out of season, and to which our hearts and tongues should be never out of tune. However it be; yet God is good. When he manifests himself as a consuming fire to sinners; his people can rejoice in him as their light. Nay, they had reason to say, that in this God was good; *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*, but the sacrifice in our stead, for which we are bound to be very thankful.

(2.) The king and all the people offered sacrifices in abundance, *ver. 4, 5.* With these they feasted this holy fire, and bid it welcome to the altar. They had offered sacrifices before, but now they increased them. Note, The tokens of God's favour to us should enlarge our hearts in his service, and make us to abound therein more and more. The king's example stirred up the people. Good work is then likely to go on, when the leaders of a people lead in it. The sacrifices were so numerous, that the altar would not contain them all, but rather than any of them should be turned back, though we may suppose the blood of them all was sprinkled upon the altar, yet the flesh of the burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings was burnt in the midst of the court, *ver. 7.* which Solomon either hallowed for that service, or hallowed by it. In case of necessity, the pavement might be an altar;

(3.) The



(3.) The priests did their part, they waited on their offices; and the singers and the musicians on theirs, *ver.* 6. with the instruments that David made, and the hymn that David had put into their hand, as some think it may be read, meaning that, *1 Chron.* xvi. 7. Or, as we read it, when David praised by their ministry. He employed, directed, and encouraged them in this work of praising God, and therefore their performances were accepted as his act, and he is said to praise by their ministry.

(4.) The whole congregation expressed the greatest joy and satisfaction imaginable. They kept the feast of the dedication of the altar seven days, from the second to the ninth, then the tenth day was the day of atonement, when they were to afflict their souls for sin, and that was not unseasonable in the midst of their rejoicings; then on the 15th day began the feast of tabernacles, which continued to the 22d, and they did not part till the 23d. We must never grudge the time that we spend in the service of God, and communion with him; not think it long, or grow sick of it.

(5.) Solomon went on in his work, and prosperously effected all he designed, for the adorning both of God's house and his own, *ver.* 11. Those that begin with the service of God, are likely to go on successfully in their own affairs. It was Solomon's praise, that what he undertook he went through with, and it was by the grace of God, that he prospered in it.

12. ¶ And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to my self, for an house of sacrifice. 13. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 14. If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. 16. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. 17. And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments: 18. Then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel. 19. But if ye turn away and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them: 20. Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a by-word among all nations. 21. And this house which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land and unto this house? 22. And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

That God accepted Solomon's prayer, appeared by the fire from heaven: But it is possible a prayer may be accepted, and yet not answered in the letter of it; and therefore God appeared to him in the night, as he did once before, *chap.* i. 7. and after a day of sacrifice too, as then; and gave him a particular answer to his prayer. We had the substance of it before, *1 Kings* ix. 2,—9.

1. He promised to own this house, for a house of sacrifice to Israel, and a house of prayer for all people, *Isa.* lvi. 7. *ver.* 12, 16. My name shall be there for ever, i. e. there will I make my self known, and there I will be called upon.

2. He promised to answer the prayers of his people that should at any time be made in that place, *ver.* 13, 14, 15. (1.) National judgments are here supposed, *ver.* 13. Famine and pestilence, and perhaps war, is intended by the locusts devouring the land, enemies as greedy as locusts, and laying all waste. (2.) National repentance, prayer, and reformation are required, *ver.* 14. God expects that his people, who are called by his name, if they have dishonoured his name by their iniquity, should ho-

nour it by accepting the punishment of their iniquity. They must humble themselves under his hand, must pray for the removal of the judgment, must seek the face and favour of God; and yet all this will not do, unless they turn from their wicked ways, and return to the God from whom they have revolted. (3.) National mercy is then promised; that God will forgive their sin, which brought the judgment upon them, and then heal their land, redress all their grievances. Pardoning mercy makes way for healing mercy, *Psal.* ciii. 3. *Matth.* ix. 2.

3. He promised to perpetuate Solomon's kingdom, upon condition he persevered in his duty, *ver.* 17, 18. If he hoped for the benefit of God's covenant with David, he must imitate the example of David.

But he sets before him death as well as life, the curse as well as the blessing. 1. He supposeth it possible, that though they had this temple built to the honour of God, yet they might be drawn aside to worship other gods, *ver.* 19. He knew their bent to backslide into that sin. 2. He threatens it as certain, that if they did so, it would certainly be the ruin both of church and state. (1.) It would be the ruin of their state, *ver.* 20. Though they have taken deep root, and taken root long in this good land, yet I will pluck them up by the roots, extirpate the whole nation, pluck them up as men pluck up weeds out of their garden, which are thrown to the dunghill. (2.) It would be the ruin of their church; this sanctuary would be no sanctuary to them, to protect them from the judgments of God, as they imagined, saying, *The temple of the Lord are we*, *Jer.* vii. 4. This house which is high, not only for the magnificence of its structure, but for the designed ends and uses of it, shall be an astonishment, it shall come down wonderfully, *Lam.* i. 9. to the amazement of all the neighbours.

### CHAP. VIII.

In this chapter we are told, (1.) What cities Solomon built, *ver.* 1—6. (2.) What workmen Solomon employed, *ver.* 7—10. (3.) What care he took about a proper settlement for his wife, *ver.* 11. (4.) What a good method he put the temple-service into, *ver.* 12—16. (5.) What trading he had with foreign countries, *ver.* 17, 18.

1. **A**ND it came to pass (at the end of twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of the LORD, and his own house) 2. That the cities which Hiram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there. 3. And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it. 4. And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store-cities, which he built in Hamath. 5. Also he built Beth-horon the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fenced cities, with walls, gates, and bars: 6. And Baalath, and all the store-cities, that Solomon had, and all the chariot-cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion. 7. ¶ As for all the people that were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which were not of Israel; 8. But of their children who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not; them did Solomon make to pay tribute, until this day. 9. But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work: but they were men of war, and chief of his captains, and captains of his chariots and horsemen. 10. And these were the chief of king Solomons officers, even two hundred and fifty, that bare rule over the people. 11. ¶ And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David, unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.

This we had *1 Kings* ix. 10—24. and therefore shall only observe here,

1. That though Solomon was a man of great learning and knowledge, yet he spent his days not in contemplation but in action, not in his study but in his country, in building cities and fortifying them. In a time of peace preparing for a time of war, which is as much a man's business, as it is in summer to provide food for winter.

2. As



2. As he was a man of business himself, and did not consult his own ease, so he employed a great many hands, kept abundance of people to work. It is the interest of a state by all means possible to promote and encourage industry, and to keep its subjects from idleness. A great many strangers there were in Israel, many that remained of the Canaanites, and they were welcome to live there, but not to live and do nothing. The men of Laish, that had no business, were an easy prey to the invaders, *Judges xviii. 7.*

3. That when Solomon had begun with building the house of God, and made good work and quick work of that, he prospered in all his undertakings, so that *he built all that he desired to build*, ver. 6. Those that have a genius for building find that one project draws on another, and the latter must amend and improve the former. Now observe, (1.) How the divine providence even gratified Solomon's humour, and gave him success not only in all that he needed to build, and that was for his advantage to build, but in all that he had a mind to build. So indulgent a Father is God sometimes to the innocent desires of his children that serve him. Thus he pleased Jacob with that promise, *Joseph shall put his hand on thine eyes*. (2.) That Solomon knew how to set bounds to his desires. He was none of those that enlarge them endlessly, and can never be satisfied, but knew when to take up; for he finished all he desired, and then he desired no more; did not sit down and fret that he had not more cities to build, as Alexander did, that he had not more worlds to conquer, *Hab. ii. 5.*

4. That one reason why Solomon built a palace on purpose for the queen, and removed her and her court to it, was because he thought it by no means proper that she should dwell in the house of David, ver. 11. considering that that had been a place of great piety, and perhaps her house was a place of great vanity. She was profelyted, it is likely, to the Jewish religion, but it is a question whether all her servants were. Perhaps, they had among them the idols of Egypt, and a great deal of profaneness and debauchery, it may be. Now though Solomon had not zeal and courage enough to suppress and punish what was amiss there, yet he so far consulted the honour of his father's memory, that he would not suffer that place to be thus profaned, where the ark of God had been, and where holy David had prayed many a good prayer, and sung many a sweet psalm. Not that all the places, where the ark had been, were so holy as never to be put to a common use, for then the houses of Abinadab and Obed-edom must have been so. But the place where it had been so long, and had been so publickly attended on, was so venerable, that it was not fit to be the place of so much gaiety, not to say iniquity, as was to be found, or was to be feared, in the court that Pharaoh's daughter kept. Note, Between things sacred and things common, the ancient land-marks ought to be kept up. It was an outer court of the temple that was the court of the women.

12. ¶ Then Solomon offered burnt-offerings unto the LORD, on the altar of the LORD, which he had built before the porch: 13. Even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new-moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles. 14. ¶ And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required: the porters also by their courses, at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded. 15. And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites, concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures. 16. Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD, and until it was finished: so the house of the LORD was perfected. 17. ¶ Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Elath, at the sea-side in the land of Edom. 18. And Hiram sent him by the hands of his servants, ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to king Solomon.

Here is, 1. Solomon's devotion. The building of the temple was in order to the service of the temple; whatever cost he was at in rearing the structure, if he had neglected the wor-

ship that was to be performed there, it had been all to no purpose. Assisting the devotion of others, will not atone for our own neglects. When Solomon had built the temple;

(1.) He kept up the holy sacrifices there according to the law of Moses, ver. 12, 13. In vain had the altar been built; and in vain had fire come down from heaven, if sacrifices had, not been constantly brought as the food of that altar, and the fuel of that fire. There were daily sacrifices, *a certain rate every day*, as duly as the day came; weekly sacrifices on the sabbath, double to what was offered on other days; monthly sacrifices, *on the new moons*; and yearly sacrifices, at the three solemn feasts. They are spiritual sacrifices that are now required of us, which we are to bring daily and weekly; and it is good to be in a settled method of devotion.

(2.) He kept up the holy songs there, according to the law of David, who is here called *the man of God*, as Moses was, because he was both instructed and authorized of God to make these establishments: and Solomon took care to see them observed, *as the duty of every day required*, ver. 14. Solomon, though a wise and great man, and the builder of the temple, did not attempt to amend, alter, or add to what the man of God had in God's name commanded, but closely adhered to that, and used his authority to have that duly observed, and then *none departed from the commandment of the king, concerning any matter*, ver. 15. He observed God's laws, and then all obeyed his orders. When the service of the temple was put into this good order, then it is said, *the house of the Lord was perfected*, ver. 16. The work was the main matter, not the place, the temple was unfinished till this was done.

2. Solomon's merchandize. He did himself in person visit the sea-port towns of Elath and Ezion-geber; for they that deal much in the world, will find it their interest, as far as they can, to inspect their affairs themselves, and to see with their own eyes, ver. 17. Canaan was a rich country, and yet must send to Ophir for gold: the Israelites were a wise and understanding people, and yet must be beholden to the king of Tyre for *men that had knowledge of the seas*, ver. 18. And yet Canaan was God's peculiar land, and Israel God's peculiar people; which teacheth us, that grace, and not gold, is the best riches; and acquaintance with God and his law, not with arts and sciences, the best knowledge.

## C H A P. IX.

Solomon here continues to look very great both at home and abroad. We had this account of his grandeur, 1 Kings x. nothing is here added: but his defection towards his latter end, which we have there, chap. xi. is here omitted; and the close of this chapter brings him to the grave with an unstained reputation. I think, none of the chapters in the Chronicles agrees so much with a chapter in the Kings, as this doth with 1 Kings x. verse for verse, only that the two first verses there are put into one here, and ver. 25. here is taken from 1 Kings iv. 26. and the three last verses here, from 1 Kings xi. 41—43. Here is, (1.) The honour which the queen of Sheba did to Solomon, in the visit she made him to hear his wisdom, ver. 1—12. (2.) Many instances given of the riches and splendor of Solomon's court, ver. 13—28. (3.) The conclusion of his reign, ver. 29—31.

1. **A**ND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. 2. And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not. 3. And when the queen had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, 4. And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, his cup-bearers also, and their apparel, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. 5. And she said to the king, *It was a true report which I heard in mine own land, of thine acts, and of thy wisdom*: 6. Howbeit, I believed not their words; until I came and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. 7. Happy are thy



thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. 8. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the LORD thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice. 9. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon. 10. And the servants also of Hiram, and the servants of Solomon, which brought gold from Ophir, brought algum-trees, and precious stones. 11. And the king made of the algum-trees, terraces to the house of the LORD, and to the king's palace, and harps and psalteries for fingers: and there were none such seen before in the land of Judah. 12. And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba, all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which she had brought unto the king: so she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants.

This passage of story has been largely considered in the Kings, yet because our Saviour has proposed it as an example to us in our inquiries after him, *Matt. xi. 42.* we must not pass it over without observing briefly,

1. That *those that honour God, he will honour*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. Solomon had greatly honoured God, in building, beautifying, and dedicating the temple; all his wisdom and all his wealth were employed for the making of that consummate piece; and now God made his wisdom and wealth to redound greatly to his reputation. The way to have both the credit and comfort of all our endowments, and all our enjoyments, is to consecrate them to God, and use them for him.

2. That those who know the worth of true wisdom, will grudge no pains or cost to compass it. The queen of Sheba put her self to a great deal of trouble and expence to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and yet learning from him to serve God and do her duty, she thought her self well paid for her pains. Heavenly wisdom is that *pearl of great price*, which if we part with all for the purchase of, we make a good bargain.

3. That as every man has received the gift, so he ought to minister the same for the edification of others, as he has opportunity. Solomon was communicative of his wisdom, and willing to teach others what he knew himself. Being *taught of God*, freely he had received, and freely he gave. Let them that are rich in wisdom, as well as wealth, learn to do good, and be ready to distribute. *Give to every one that asketh.*

4. That good order in a family, a great family, especially in the things of God, and a regular discharge of the duties of religious worship, is a very amiable thing, and to be much admired wherever it is found. The queen of Sheba was hugely affected to see the decency with which Solomon's servants attended him, and with which both he and they attended in the house of God. David's ascent to the house of the Lord was a most pleasant thing, *Psal. xlii. 4.*

5. That those are happy, who have the opportunity of a constant converse with such as are knowing, wise, and good. The queen of Sheba thought Solomon's servants happy, who continually *heard his wisdom*, for it seems, even to them he was communicative. And it is observable, that the posterity of those who had places in his court, were willing to have the names of their ancestors forgotten, and thought themselves sufficiently distinguished and dignified, when they were called *the children of Solomon's servants*, Ezra ii. 55. vii. 57. so eminent were they, it was honour enough to be named from them.

6. We ought to rejoice and give God thanks for the gifts, graces, and usefulness of others. The queen of Sheba blessed God for the honour he put upon Solomon, and the favour he did to Israel in advancing him to the throne, *ver. 8.* By giving God the praise of the prosperity of others, we share in the comfort of it, whereas by envying the prosperity of others, we lose the comfort even of our own. The happiness both of king and kingdom she runs up to the fountain of all bliss, the divine favour; it was because *thy God delighted in thee*, and because he *loved Israel*. Those mercies are doubly sweet, which we can taste the kindness and good will of God in as our God.

7. It becomes those that are wise and good to be generous according to their place and power. The queen of She-

ba was so to Solomon, Solomon was so to her, *ver. 9, 12.* They both knew how to value wisdom, and therefore were neither of them covetous of their money; but cultivated the acquaintance, and confirmed the friendship they had contracted, by mutual presents. Our Lord Jesus has promised to give us all our desire, *Ask, and it shall be given you.* Let us study what we shall render to him, and not think any thing too much to do, or suffer, or part with for him.

13. ¶ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year, was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold; 14. Besides *that which* chapmen and merchants brought: and all the kings of Arabia, and governors of the country, brought gold and silver to Solomon. 15. ¶ And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred *shekels* of beaten gold went to one target. 16. And three hundred shields made *be of* beaten gold: three hundred *shekels* of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. 17. ¶ Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. 18. And *there were* six steps to the throne, with a foot-stool of gold, *which were* fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting-place, and two lions standing by the stays. 19. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other, upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom. 20. ¶ And all the drinking-vessels of king Solomon were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was *not* any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon. 21. For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. 22. And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. 23. ¶ And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart. 24. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. 25. ¶ And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the chariot-cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. 26. ¶ And he reigned over all the kings, from the river, even unto the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. 27. And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycomore-trees, that *are* in the plains in low abundance. 28. And they brought unto Solomon horses out of Egypt, and out of all lands. 29. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer, against Jeroboam the son of Nebat? 30. And Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. 31. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father, and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

We have here Solomon in his throne, and Solomon in his grave, for the throne would not secure him from the grave; *Mors sceptris lignibus aequat.*

1. Here is Solomon reigning in wealth and power, in ease and fulness, such as, for ought I know, could never since be paralleled by any king whatsoever. I cannot pretend to be critical in comparing the grandeur of Solomon with that of some of the great princes of the earth, but the most illustrious of them were famed for their wars, whereas Solomon reigned forty years in profound peace. Some of those that might be thought to vie with Solomon, affected retirement, kept people in awe by keeping them at a mighty distance; no body must see them or come near them upon pain of death: But Solomon went much abroad, and appeared in publick business; so that all things considered, the promise was fulfilled, that God would give him riches, and wealth, and honour, such as no kings *have had, or shall have*, chap. i. 12.

(1.) Never any prince appeared in publick with greater splendor than Solomon did, which to those that judge by the sight of the eye, as most people do, would very much recommend



commend him. He had two hundred targets, and three hundred shields, all of beaten gold, carried before him, *ver. 15, 16.* sat upon a most stately throne, *ver. 17, 18, 19.* *There was not the like in any kingdom:* The lustre wherein he appeared, was typical of the spiritual glory of the kingdom of the Messiah, and but a faint representation of his throne, which is above every throne. Solomon's pomp was all artificial, and therefore our Saviour prefers the natural beauty of the lilies of the field before it, *Matt. vi. 29.* *Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

(2.) Never any prince had greater plenty of gold and silver, though there was no gold or silver mines in his own kingdom. Either he made himself master of the mines in other countries, and having a populous country, sent hands to dig out those rich metals; or having a fruitful country, he exported the commodities of it, and with them fetched home all this gold that is here spoken of, *ver. 13, 14, 21.*

(3.) Never any prince had such presents brought him by all his neighbours as Solomon had. *All the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought him gold and silver,* *ver. 14.* Not as tribute which he extorted from them, but as free-will offerings to procure his favour, or in a way of exchange for some of the products of his husbandry, corn, or cattle. All the kings of the earth brought him presents, *i. e.* all in those parts of the world, *ver. 24, 28.* because they coveted his acquaintance and friendship. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom as soon as he was born, the wise men of the east brought presents, *Gold, frankincense and myrrh,* *Matth. ii. 11.* and to whom all that are about him must bring presents, *Psalms lxxvi. 11. Rom. xii. 1.*

(4.) Never any prince was so renowned for wisdom, so courted, so consulted, so admired, *ver. 23.* *The kings of the earth* (for it was too great a favour for common persons to pretend to) *sought to hear his wisdom.* Either his natural philosophy, or his skill in physick, or his state policy, or his rules of prudence for the conduct of human life, or perhaps the principles of his religion, and the reasons of it. The application which they then made to Solomon to hear his wisdom, will aggravate, shame and condemn mens general contempt of Christ, and his gospel; though in them are *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,* yet none of the princes of this world desire to know them, for they are foolishness to them, *1 Cor. ii. 8, 14.*

2. Here is Solomon's dying; stripped of his pomp, and leaving all his wealth and power, not to one whom he knew not *whether he would be a wise man or a fool,* *Eccl. ii. 19.* but who he knew would be a fool: This was not only vanity, but vexation of spirit, *ver. 29, 30, 31.*

It is very observable, that no mention is here made of Solomon's departure from God in his latter days, not the least hint given of it; (1.) Because the holy Ghost would teach us not to take delight in repeating the faults and follies of others. If those that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour, miscarry themselves, though it may be of use to take notice of their miscarriages for warning to ourselves and others, yet we must not be forward to mention them; once speaking of them is enough, what needs that unpleasant string be again struck upon? Why can we not do as the sacred historian here doth, speak largely of that in others, which is praise worthy, without saying any thing of their blemishes, yea, though they have been gross and obvious. This is but doing as we would be done by. (2.) Because, though he fell, yet he was not utterly cast down: Therefore his sin is not again recorded, because it was repented of and pardoned, and so became as if it had never been. Scripture silence sometimes speaks: I am willing to believe, that its silence here concerning the sin of Solomon, is an intimation that none of the sins he committed were mentioned against him, *Ezek. xxxiii. 16.* When God pardons sin, he casts it behind his back, and remembers it no more.

## CHAP. X.

*This chapter is copied almost verbatim from 1 Kings xii. 1—19. where it was opened at large. Solomon's defection from God was not repeated, but the defection of the ten tribes from his family is, in this chapter, where we find, (1.) How foolish Rehoboam was in his treating with them, ver. 1, 5—15. (2.) How wicked the people were in complaining of Solomon, ver. 2—4. and forsaking Rehoboam, ver. 16—19. (3.) How just and righteous God was in all this, ver. 15. his counsel was thereby fulfilled. With him is strength and wisdom, both the deceived and the deceiver (the fool and the knave) are his, Job xii. 16. i. e. are made use of by him, to serve his purposes.*

1. **A**ND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for to Shechem were all Israel come to make him king. 2. And it came to pass when Jeroboam the son of Nebat (who was in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king) heard it, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt. 3. And they sent and called him: so Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying, 4. Thy father made our yoke grievous, now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee. 5. And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed. 6. And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father, while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me, to return answer to this people? 7. And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever. 8. But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him. 9. And he said unto them, What advice give ye, that we may return answer to his people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us? 10. And the young men that were brought up with him, spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it somewhat lighter for us: thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my fathers loyns. 11. For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

We may observe here,

1. That the wisest and best cannot give every body content. Solomon enriched and advanced his kingdom, did all (one would think) that could be done to make them happy and easy: and yet either he was indiscreet in burthening them with the imposition of taxes and services, or at least there was some colour of reason to think him so. No man is perfectly wise. It is probable, it was when Solomon had declined from God and his duty, that his wisdom failed him, and God left him to himself to act thus impolitically. Even Solomon's treasures were exhausted by his love of women; and, it is probable, it was to maintain them, and their pride, luxury, and idolatry, that he squeezed his subjects.

2. That turbulent and ungrateful spirits will find fault with the government, and complain of grievances, when they have very little reason to do so. Had they not peace in Solomon's time? Never plundered by invaders, as formerly, never put in fear by the alarms of war, nor obliged to jeopard their lives in the high places of the field. Had they not plenty? Meat enough, and money enough, what would they more? *O fortunati nimium, bona si sua norint!* And yet they complain, that Solomon made their yoke grievous. If any complain thus of the yoke of Christ, that they may have a pretence to break his bands in funder, and cast away his cords from them, we are sure he never gave them any cause at all for the complaint, whatever Solomon did. His yoke is easy, and his burthen light. He never made us serve with an offering, nor wearied us with incense.

3. That many ruin themselves and their interests, by trampling upon, and provoking their inferiors; Rehoboam thought, because he was king, he could king it as well as his father had done, have what he would, and do what he would, and carry all before him; but though he wore his father's crown, he wanted his father's head-piece, and ought to have considered, that being another man from what his father was, he ought to take other measures; such a wise man as Solomon may do as he will, but such a fool as Rehoboam must do as he can. The high mettled horse may be kicked and spurred by him that has the art of managing him, but if an unskilful horseman do it, it is at his peril. Rehoboam paid dear for threatening and talking big, and thinking to carry it with a high hand. It was Job's wisdom as well as his virtue, that he despised not the cause of his man servant, or maid servant, when they argued with him, *Job xxxi. 13.* but heard them patiently, considered their reasons, and gave them a soft answer: And the like tender consideration of those in subjection, and a forwardness to make them easy, will



will be the comfort and praise of all in authority, in church, state, and families.

4. That moderate counsels are generally wisest and best. Gentleness will do what violence will not do; most people love to be spoken fair. Rehoboam's old experienced counsellors directed him to this method, *ver. 7. Be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, and thou art sure of them for ever.* Good words cost nothing but a little self-denial, and yet they purchase great things.

5. That God fulfils the counsels of his own wisdom oftentimes by infatuating men, and giving them up to the counsels of their own folly. No more needs be done to ruin men, than to leave them to themselves, and their own pride and passion.

12. ¶ So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day. 13. And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, 14. And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15. So the king hearkened not unto the people, for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 16. ¶ And when all Israel saw that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and we have none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: and now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents. 17. But as for the children of Israel, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18. Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram that was over the tribute, and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died: but king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. 19. And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

We may learn here,

1. That when publick affairs are in a ferment, violent proceedings do but make ill worse. Rough answers (such as Rehoboam here gave) do but stir up anger, and bring oyl to the flames. The pilot has need to steer steady in a storm. Many have been driven to the mischief they did not intend, by being too severely dealt with, for what they did intend.

2. That whatever the devices and designs of men are, God is by all, doing his own work, and fulfilling the word which he has spoken, not one jot or tittle of which shall fall to the ground. The cause of the king's wilfulness and incogitancy was of God, that he might perform the word which he spake by Ahijah, *ver. 13.* This doth not at all excuse Rehoboam's folly, nor lessen the guilt of his haughtiness and passion, that God was pleased to serve his own ends by it.

3. That worldly wealth, honour and dominion, are very uncertain things. Solomon reigned over all Israel, and one would think had done enough to secure the monarchy intire to his family for many ages, and yet he is scarce cold in his grave, before ten of the twelve tribes finally revolt from his son. All the good services he had done for Israel, are now forgotten, *What portion have we in David?* Thus is the government of Christ cast off by many, notwithstanding all he hath done to oblige the children of men for ever to himself; they say, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* But their rebellion will certainly be their ruin.

4. That God often visits the iniquity of the fathers, upon the children. Solomon forsakes God, and therefore not he, but his son after him is forsaken, by the greatest part of his people. Thus God, by making the penal consequences of sin to last long, and visibly to continue after the sinner's death, would give an indication of its malignity, and perhaps some intimation of the perpetuity of its punishment. He that sins against God, not only wrongs his soul, but perhaps wrongs his seed more than he thinks of.

5. That when God is fulfilling his threatnings, he will take care that at the same time promises do not fall to the ground. When Solomon's iniquity is remembered, and for it his son loseth ten tribes, David's piety is not forgotten, nor the promise made to him, but for the sake of that, his grandson had two tribes preserved to him. The failings of the faints, shall not frustrate any promise made to Christ their head. They shall be chastised, but the covenant not broken, *Psal. lxxxix. 33.*

## C H A P. XI.

*We are here going on with the history of Rehoboam. (1.) His attempt to recover the ten tribes he had lost, and the letting fall of that attempt, in obedience to the divine command, ver. 1—4. (2.) His successful endeavours to preserve the two tribes that remained, ver. 5—12. (3.) The resort of the priests and Levites to him, ver. 13—17. (4.) An account of his wives and children, ver. 18—23.*

1. **A**ND when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. 2. But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 3. Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, 4. Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house, for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam. 5. ¶ And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah. 6. He built even Beth-lehem, and Etam, and Tekoa, 7. And Beth-zur, and Shoco, and Adullam, 8. And Gath, and Mareslah, and Ziph, 9. And Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah, 10. And Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah, and in Benjamin, fenced cities. 11. And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oyl and wine. 12. And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

How the ten tribes deserted the house of David, we read in the foregoing chapter; they had formerly sat loose to that family, 2 Sam. xx. 1, 2. and now they quite threw it off; not considering how much it would weaken the common interest, and take Israel down from that pitch of glory, to which it was arrived in the last reign. But thus the kingdom must be corrected as well as the house of David.

1. Rehoboam at length, like a bold man, raises an army, with a design to reduce the revolters, *ver. 1.* Judah and Benjamin were not only resolved to continue their allegiance to him, but ready to give him the best assistance they could for the recovery of his right. Judah was his own tribe, that owned him some years before the rest did; Benjamin was the tribe in which Jerusalem, or the greatest part of it stood, which perhaps was one reason why that tribe clave to him.

2. Yet like a conscientious man, when God forbade him to prosecute this design, in obedience to him he let it fall; either, because he revered the divine authority, or because he knew he should not prosper if he should go contrary to God's command, but instead of retrieving what was lost, would be in danger of losing what he had. It is dangerous undertaking any thing, but especially undertaking a war, contrary to the will of God. God calls him, *ver. 3. Rehoboam the son of Solomon,* to intimate that this was determined for the sin of Solomon, and it would be to no purpose to oppose a decree that was gone forth. They obeyed the words of the Lord, and tho' it looked mean, and would turn to their reproach among their neighbours, yet because God would have it so, they laid down their arms.

3. Like



3. Like a discreet man he fortified his own country. He saw it was to no purpose to think of reducing those that were revolted; a few good words might have prevented their defection, but now all the forces of his kingdom cannot bring them back; the thing is done, and so it must rest, it is his wisdom to make the best of it. Perhaps the same young counsellors that had advised him to answer them roughly, urged him to fight them, notwithstanding the divine inhibition, but he had paid dear enough for being advised by them, and therefore now we may suppose his aged and experienced counsellors were hearkened to, and they advised him to submit to the will of God concerning what was lost, but to make it his business to keep what he had. It is probable it was by their advice that, (1.) He fortified his frontiers, and many of the principal cities of his kingdom, which in Solomon's peaceable reign no care had been taken for the defence of. (2.) He furnished them with good store of victuals and arms, *ver. 11, 12.* Because God forbid him to fight, he did not therefore sit down sullen, and say he would do nothing for the publick safety, if he might not do that; but prudently provided against an attack. They that may not be conquerors yet may be builders.

13. ¶ And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel, resorted to him out of all their coasts. 14. (For the Levites left their suburbs, and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priests office unto the LORD. 15. And he ordained him priests for the high-places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.) 16. And after them out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel, came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers. 17. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon. 18. ¶ And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, and Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse: 19. Which bare him children; Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zaphan. 20. And after her, he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom, which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith. 21. And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters) 22. And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, to be ruler among his brethren: for he thought to make him king. 23. And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victual in abundance: and he desired many wives.

See here, 1. How Rehoboam was strengthened by the accession of the priests and Levites, and all the devout and pious Israelites to him; even all that were true to their God, and their religion.

1. Jeroboam cast them off; *i. e.* He set up such a way of worship as he knew they could not in conscience comply with, which obliged them to withdraw from his altar, and at the same time he would not allow them to go up to Jerusalem to worship at the altar there; so that he totally cast them off from executing the priests office, *ver. 14.* And very willing he was they should turn themselves out of their places, that room might be made for those scandalous paltry fellows which he ordained priests for the high places, *ver. 15.* compare 1 Kings xii. 31. No marvel if he that cast off God, cast off his ministers; they were not for his purpose, would not do whatever he bid them do, would not serve his gods, nor worship the golden image which he had set up.

2. They thereupon left their suburbs and possessions, *ver. 14.* Out of the lot of each tribe, the Levites had cities allowed *Nº. 30.*

them, where they were comfortably provided for, and had opportunity of doing much good. But now they were driven out of all their cities, except those in Judah and Benjamin: one would think their maintenance well settled, and yet they lost it. It was a comfort to them, that the law so often told them the Lord was their inheritance; and so they should find him, when they were turned out of their house and harbour. But why did they leave their possessions? (1.) Because they saw they could do no good among their neighbours, in whom, now Jeroboam set up his calves, the old proneness to idolatry revived. (2.) Because they themselves would be in continual temptation to some base compliances, and in danger of being drawn insensibly to that which was evil. If we pray in sincerity not to be led into temptation, we will get and keep as far as we can out of the way of it. (3.) Because if they retained their integrity, they had reason to expect persecution from Jeroboam and his sons: The priests they made for the devils, would not let the Lord's priests be long among them. No secular advantages whatsoever should draw us thither, or detain us there, where we are in danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

3. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, *ver. 14.* and presented themselves to Rehoboam, *ver. 13. marg.* Where should God's priests and Levites be, but where his altar was? Thither they came, because it was their business to attend at the times appointed. (1.) It was a mercy to them that they had a place of refuge to flee to, and that when Jeroboam cast them off, there were those so near that would entertain them, and bid them welcome, and they were not forced into the lands of the heathen. (2.) It was an evidence they loved their work better than their maintenance, in that they left their suburbs and possessions in the country, where they might have lived at ease upon their own, because they were restrained from serving God there, and cast themselves upon God's providence and the charity of their brethren, to come there where they might have the free enjoyment of God's ordinances, according to his institution. Poverty in the way of duty, is to be chosen rather than plenty in the way of sin. Better live upon alms, or die in a prison with a good conscience, than roll in wealth and pleasure with a prostituted one. (3.) It was the wisdom and praise of Rehoboam and his people, that they bid them welcome, though they crowded themselves, perhaps, to make room for them. Conscientious refugees will bring a blessing along with them to the countries that entertain them, as they leave a curse behind them, with those that expel them. *Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation that keepeth truth may enter in;* it will be good policy: see *Isa. xxvi. 1, 2.*

4. When the priests and Levites came to Jerusalem, all the devout pious Israelites of every tribe followed them; such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, that made conscience of their duty to God, and were sincere and resolute in it, they left the inheritance of their fathers, and went and took houses in Jerusalem, that they might have free access to the altar of God, and be out of the temptation to worship the calves, *ver. 16.* Note, 1. That is best for us that is best for our souls; and in all our choices, advantages for religion must take place of all outward conveniences. 2. Where God's faithful priests are, his faithful people should be. If Jeroboam cast off God's ministers, every true-born Israelite will think himself obliged to own them, and stand by them. *For sake not the Levite, the out-cast Levite, as long as thou livest.* When the ark removes, do you remove and go after it, *Josh. iii. 3.*

5. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, *ver. 17.* not only by the addition of so many persons to it, who, it is likely, brought what they could of their effects with them, but by their piety and their prayers, they procured a blessing upon the kingdom which was a sanctuary to them: see *Zech. xii. 5.* It is the interest of a nation to protect and encourage religion, and religious people, and adds more than any thing to its strength. They made him and his people strong three years; for so long they walked in the way of David and Solomon, their good way; but when they forsook that, and so threw themselves out of God's favour and protection, the best friends they had could no longer help to strengthen them. We retain our strength while we stick to God and our duty, and no longer.

2. How Rehoboam was weakened by indulging himself in his pleasures. He desired many wives, as his father did, *ver. 23.* yet, (1.) In this he was more wise than his father, that for ought appears he did not marry with strange wives; the wives that are mentioned here were not only daughters of Israel, but of the family of David; one was a descendant from Eliab, David's brother, *ver. 18.* another from Absalom (that Absalom, it is supposed, who was) David's son, *ver. 20.* another of Jerimoth David's son. (2.) In this he was more happy than his father, that he had many sons and daughters; where-



as we read not of more than one son that his father had. One can scarce imagine he had no more; but no more that were worth mentioning, whereas several of Rehoboam's sons are here named; *ver.* 19, 20. as men of note, and such active men, that he thought it his wisdom to *disperse them throughout the countries of Judah and Benjamin*, *ver.* 23. either, (1.) That they might not be rivals with his son Abijah, whom he designed for his successor: or rather, (2.) Because he could repose a confidence in them, for the preserving of the publick peace and safety, could trust them with the fenced cities, which he took care to have well victualled, that they might stand him in stead in case of an invasion. Thus he that dealt foolishly at first, dealt wisely afterwards in his affairs. After-wisdom is better than none at all; nay, they say, "Wit is never good till it is bought." Though his was dear bought with the loss of a kingdom.

## C H A P. XII.

*This chapter gives us a more full account of the reign of Rehoboam than we had before in Kings, and it is a very melancholy account; methinks we are in the book of Judges again; for,* (1.) *Rehoboam and his people did evil in the sight of the Lord*, *ver.* 1. (2.) *God thereupon sold them into the hands of Shishak king of Egypt, who greatly oppressed them*, *ver.* 2—4. (3.) *God sent a prophet to them, to expound to them the judgment, and to call them to repentance*, *ver.* 5. (4.) *They thereupon humbled themselves*, *ver.* 6. (5.) *God, upon their repentance, turned from his anger*, *ver.* 7, 12. and yet left them under the marks of his displeasure, *ver.* 8—11. Lastly, *Here is a general character of Rehoboam and his reign, with the conclusion of it*, *ver.* 13—16.

1. **A**N D it came to pass when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. 2. And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem (because they had transgressed against the LORD) 3. With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. 4. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem. 5. ¶ Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I left you in the hand of Shishak. 6. Whereupon the princes of Israel, and the king humbled themselves, and they said, The LORD is righteous. 7. And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves, therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. 8. Nevertheless, they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. 9. So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 10. Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. 11. And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fet them, and brought them again into the guard-chamber. 12. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD

turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

Israel was very much disgraced and weakned by being divided into two kingdoms; yet the kingdom of Judah having both the temple and the royal city, both the house of David and the house of Aaron, might have done very well if they had continued in the way of their duty; but here we have all out of order there.

1. Rehoboam and his people left God. He *forsook the law of the Lord*, and so in effect forsook God, and *all Israel with him*, *ver.* 1. He had his happy triennium, when he walked in the way of David and Solomon, *chap.* xi. 17. but it expired, and he grew remiss in the worship of God; in what instances we are not told, but he fell off, and Judah with him, here called Israel, because they walked in the evil ways which Jeroboam had drawn the kingdom of Israel into. This he did *when he had established the kingdom, and strengthened himself*: as long as he thought his throne tottered, he kept to his duty, that he might make God his friend; but when he found it stood pretty firm, he thought he had no more occasion for religion, he was safe enough without it: thus *the prosperity of fools destroys them*. *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked*. When men prosper, and are in no apprehension of troubles, they are ready to say to God, Depart from us.

2. God presently brought trouble upon them, to awaken them, and recover them to repentance before their hearts were hardened. It was but in the fourth year of Rehoboam, that they began to corrupt themselves, and in the fifth year, the king of Egypt came up against them with a vast army, took the fenced cities of Judah, and came up against Jerusalem, *ver.* 2, 3, 4. This great calamity coming upon them so soon after they began to desert the worship of God, by a hand they had little reason to suspect, having had a great deal of friendly correspondence with Egypt in the last reign, and coming with so much violence, that all the fenced cities of Judah, which Rehoboam had lately fortified and garrisoned, and on which he relied much for the safety of his kingdom, presently fell into the hands of the enemy without making any resistance, plainly shewed that it was of the Lord, because they had transgressed against him.

3. Left they should not readily, or not rightly understand the meaning of this providence, God by the word explains the rod, *ver.* 5. When the princes of Judah were all met at Jerusalem, probably in a great council of war, to concert measures for their own safety in this critical juncture, he sent a prophet to them, the same that had brought them an injunction from God not to fight against the ten tribes, *chap.* xi. 2. Shemaiah by name, and he told him plainly the reason why Shishak prevailed against them, was not because they had been impolitick in the management of their affairs, which perhaps the princes in this congress were enquiring into the instances of, but because they had forsaken God. God never leaves any, till they first leave him.

4. The rebukes both of the word and of the rod being thus joined, the king and princes humbled themselves before God for their iniquity, penitentially acknowledged the sin, and patiently accepted the punishment of it, saying, *The Lord is righteous*, *ver.* 6. We have none to blame but ourselves; let God be clear when he judgeth. Thus it becomes us when we are under the rebukes of providence to justify God, and judge ourselves; even kings and princes must either bend or break before God; either be humbled, or be ruined.

5. Upon the profession they made of repentance, God shewed them some favour, saved them from ruin, and yet left them under some remaining scars of the judgment, to prevent their revolt again.

1. God in mercy prevented the destruction they were now upon the brink of. Such a vast, and now victorious army as Shishak had, having made themselves masters of all the fenced cities, what other could be expected, but that the whole country, and even Jerusalem itself, would in a little time be theirs? But when God saith, *Here shall the proud waves be stayed*; the most threatening force strangely dwindles, and becomes impotent: Here again, the destroying angel, when he comes to Jerusalem, is forbidden to destroy that; *my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem*, not at this time, not by this hand, not utterly to destroy it, *ver.* 7, 12. Note, Those that acknowledge God righteous in afflicting them, shall find him gracious. They that humble themselves before him, shall find favour with him. So ready is the God of mercy to take the first occasion to shew mercy. If we have humbled hearts under humbling providences, the affliction has done its work, and it shall either be removed, or the property of it altered.

2. He



2. He granted them some deliverance; not compleat, but in part, gave them some advantages against the enemy, so that they recruited a little. *Gave them deliverance for a little while*, so some. They reformed but partially, and for a little while; soon relapsing again, and as their reformation was, so was their deliverance. Yet it is said, *ver. 12. in Judah things went well*, and began to look with a better face, (1.) In respect of piety; there were good things in Judah, so it is in the margin. Good ministers, good people, good families, who were made better by the calamities of their country. Note, In times of great corruption and degeneracy, it is some comfort if there be a remnant among whom good things are found, and that is ground of hope in Israel. (2.) In respect of prosperity; in Judah things went ill, when all the fenced cities were taken, *ver. 4.* but when they repented, the posture of their affairs altered, and things went well. Note, If things do not go so well as we could wish, yet we have reason to take notice of it with thankfulness, if they go better than likely, better than they have gone, or better than we expected or deserved, and to own God's goodness if he do but grant us some deliverance.

3. Yet he left them to smart sorely by the hand of Shishak, both in their liberty, and in their wealth. (1.) In their liberty, *ver. 8. They shall be his servants*, i. e. they shall lie much at his mercy, and be put under contribution by him, and some of them, perhaps, be taken prisoners, and held in captivity by him, *that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.* They complained, it may be, of the strictness of their religion, and therefore *forsook the law of the Lord*, (*ver. 1.*) because they thought it a yoke too hard, too heavy upon them: Well, saith God, let them mend their service if they can; let the neighbouring princes rule them a while, since they are not willing I should rule them, and let them try how they like that; they might have served God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and would not; let them serve their enemies then in hunger and thirst, Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. till they think of returning to their first master, for then it was better with them, Hos. ii. 7. This, some think, is the meaning of that, *Ezek. xx. 24, 25. Because they despised my statutes, I gave them statutes that were not good.* Note, 1. The more God's service is compared with other services, the more easy and reasonable it will appear. 2. Whatever difficulties or hardships we may imagine there are in the way of obedience, it is better a thousand times to go through them, than to expose ourselves to the punishments of disobedience. Are the laws of temperance thought hard? The effects of intemperance will be much harder. The service of virtue is perfect liberty; the service of lust is perfect slavery.

(2.) In their wealth. The king of Egypt plundered both the temple and the exchequer, the treasures of both which Solomon left very full, but he *took them away*, yea, *he took all*, all he could lay his hands on, *ver. 9.* That was it he came for. David and Solomon, that walked in the way of God, filled the treasuries, one by war, and the other by merchandize, but Rehoboam, that forsook the law of God, emptied them. The taking away of the golden shields, and the substituting of brazen ones in their place, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* we had an account of before, 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26, 27, 28.

13. ¶ So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there: and his mothers name was Naamah an Ammonitess. 14. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD. 15. Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer, concerning genealogies? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. 16. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David; and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

The story of Rehoboam's reign is here concluded, much as the story of the other reigns concludes. Two things especially are observable here,

1. That he was at length pretty well fixed in his kingdom, *ver. 13.* His fenced cities in Judah did not answer his expectation, so he now *strengthened himself in Jerusalem*, and made it his business to fortify that; and there he reigned seventeen years, *the city which the Lord had chosen to put his name there.* This speaks his honour and privilege, that he had his royal seat in the holy city, which yet was but an aggravation of his impiety; near the temple, but far from God. Frequent skirmishes there were between his subjects and Jeroboam's, such as amounted to continual wars, *ver. 15.* but

he held his own and reigned, and, as it should seem, did not so grossly forsake the law of God as he had done, *ver. 1.* in his fourth year.

2. That he was never rightly fixed in his religion, *ver. 14.* he never quite cast off God; and yet in this he did evil, that he *prepared not, he engaged not his heart to seek the Lord.* See what the fault is laid upon; 1. He did not serve the Lord, because he did not seek the Lord; he did not pray, as Solomon did, for wisdom and grace: would we pray better, we should be every way better. Or, he did not consult the word of God, did not seek to that as his oracle, nor take directions from that. 2. He made nothing of his religion, because he did not set his heart to it; never minded it with any closeness of application, had never any hearty disposition to it, nor ever came up to a steady resolution in it. What little goodness he had, it passed away like the morning cloud. And therefore he did evil, because he was never determined for that which is good. Those are easily drawn by Satan to any evil, who are wavering and inconstant in that which is good, and are never persuaded to make religion their business.

### CHAP. XIII.

We have here a much fuller account of the reign of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, than we had in the Kings. There we found that his character was no better than his father's, he walked in the sins of his father, and his heart was not right with God, 1 Kings xv. 2, 3. But here we find him more brave and successful in war than his father was. He reigned but three years, and was chiefly famous for a glorious victory he obtained over the forces of Jeroboam. Here is, (1.) The armies brought into the field on both sides, *ver. 3.* (2.) The remonstrance which Abijah made before the battle, setting forth the justice of his cause, *ver. 4—12.* (3.) The distress which Judah was brought into by the policy of Jeroboam, *ver. 13, 14.* (4.) The victory they obtained, notwithstanding, by the power of God, *ver. 15—20.* (5.) The conclusion of Abijah's reign, *ver. 21, 22.*

1. **N**OW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam, began Abijah to reign over Judah. 2. He reigned three years in Jerusalem: (his mothers name also was Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah) and there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 3. And Abijah set the battle in array, with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour. 4. ¶ And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which is in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel, 5. Ought you not to know, that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? 6. Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord. 7. And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them. 8. And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hands of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves which Jeroboam made you for gods. 9. Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods. 10. But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests which minister unto the LORD, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business. 11. And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening, burnt-sacrifices and sweet incense: the shew-bread also set they in order upon the pure table, and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him. 12. And behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you: O chil-



children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper.

Abijah's mother was called Maachah, the daughter of Abfalom, *chap. xi. 20.* here she is called Michaiiah, the daughter of Uriel. It is most probable, she was a grand-daughter of Abfalom, by his daughter Tamar, *2 Sam. xiv. 27.* and that her immediate father was this Uriel. But we are here to attend Abijah into the field of battle, with Jeroboam king of Israel.

1. God gave him leave to engage with Jeroboam, and owned him in it, though he would not permit Rehoboam to do it, *chap. xi. 4.* (1.) Jeroboam, it is probable, was now the aggressor, and what Abijah did was in his own necessary defence; Jeroboam, it may be, happening to survive Rehoboam, claimed the crown of Judah by survivorship, at least hoped to get it from this young king upon his first accession to the throne: against these impudent pretensions, it was bravely done of Abijah to take up arms, and God stood by him. (2.) When Rehoboam attempted to recover his ten tribes, Jeroboam was upon his good behaviour, and there must be some trial of him; but now he had discovered what manner of man he was, by setting up the calves, and casting off the priests, Abijah is allowed to chastise him; and it doth not appear that he intended any more, whereas Rehoboam aimed at no less than the reducing of the ten tribes, which was contrary to the counsel of God.

2. Jeroboam's army was double in number to that of Abijah, *ver. 3.* for he had ten tribes to raise an army out of, Abijah had but two. Of both sides it is said they were mighty men, chosen men, and valiant; but the army of Judah consisted of four hundred thousand, Jeroboam's army of eight hundred thousand. Yet the inferior number proves victorious; for the battle is not always to the strong, nor the cause to the majority.

3. Abijah, before he fought them, reasoned with them to persuade them, though not to return to the house of David, that matter was settled by the divine determination, and he acquiesced, yet to desist from fighting against the house of David. He would not have them *withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David*, *ver. 8.* but at least to be content with what they had. Note, It is good to try reason before we use force. If the point may be gained by dint of argument, better so than by dint of sword. We must never fly to violent methods till all the arts of persuasion have been tried in vain. War must be the *ratio ultima regum*, the last refuge of injured right. Fair reasoning may do a great deal of good, and prevent a great deal of mischief: *How forcible are right words!* Abijah was got with his army into the heart of their country, for he made this speech upon a hill in mount Ephraim, where he might be heard by Jeroboam and the principal officers, with whom, it is probable, he desired to have a treaty, which they consented to. It has been usual for great generals to make speeches to their own soldiers to animate them, and this speech of Abijah's had a tendency that way, but was directed to Jeroboam and all Israel.

Two things Abijah undertakes to make out for the satisfaction of his own men, and the conviction of the enemy.

1. That he had right on his side, a *jus divinum*, an indisputable right; you know, or ought to know, that *God gave the kingdom to David and his sons for ever*, *ver. 5.* not by common providence, his usual way of disposing kingdoms, but by a covenant of salt, a lasting covenant, a covenant made by sacrifice, which was always salted; so bishop Patrick. All Israel had owned that David was a king of God's making, and that God had entailed the crown upon his family; so that Jeroboam's taking the crown of Israel at first, was not justifiable, yet it is not certain he refers chiefly to that, for he knew Jeroboam had a grant from God of the ten tribes; but, however, his attempt now to disturb the peace and possession of the king of Judah, was by no means excusable; for when the ten tribes were given him, two were reserved for the house of David. He shews, (1.) That there was a great deal of dishonesty and dissimulation in his first setting up of himself. He *rebelled against his lord*, who had preferred him, *1 Kings xi. 28.* and basely took advantage of Rehoboam's weakness in a critical juncture, when in gratitude to his old master, and in justice to his title, he ought rather to have stood by him, and helped to secure the people in their allegiance to him; than to head a party against him, and make a prey of him, which was unworthily done, and what he could not expect to prosper in. They that support him, he calls vain men (a character perhaps borrowed from *Judg. xi. 3.*) men that did not act from any steady principle, but were given to change, and men of Belial, that were for shaking off the yoke of government, and setting those over them that would do just as they would have them do. (2.) That there was a great deal of impiety in his present attempt; for in fighting against the house of David, he fought *against the kingdom of the Lord*. They that oppose right, oppose the righteous God, that sits in the throne judging right, and cannot promise themselves success in so doing. Right may indeed go by the worst for a time; but it will prevail at last.

2. That he had God on his side. This he insists much upon, that the religion of Jeroboam and his army, was false and idolatrous; but for his part, he and his people, the men of Judah, had the pure worship of the true and living God among them. It appears by Abijah's character, *1 Kings xv. 3.* that he was not himself truly religious, and yet here he encourageth himself in this war chiefly from the religion of his kingdom; for, (1.) Whatever he was otherwise, it should seem as he was no idolater; or, if he connived at the high places and images, *chap. xiv. 3, 5.* yet he constantly kept up the temple-service. (2.) Whatever corruptions there were in the kingdom of Judah, the state of religion among them was better than in the kingdom of Israel, with which they were now contesting. (3.) It is common for those that deny the power of godliness, to boast of the form of it. (4.) It was the cause of his kingdom that he was pleading, and though he was not himself so good as he should be, yet he hoped that for the sake of the good men and good things that were in Judah, God would now appear for them. Many that have little religion themselves, yet have so much sense and grace as to value it in others. See how he describes,

1. The apostasy of Israel from God. *You are a great multitude*, saith he, far superior to us in numbers, but we need not fear you, for you have that among your selves that is enough to ruin you: for, (1.) You have calves for your gods, *ver. 8.* that are unable to protect and help you, and will certainly engage the true and living God against you. Those will be Achans, troublers of your camp. (2.) You have scoundrels for your priests, *ver. 9.* You have cast off the tribe of Levi, and the house of Aaron, whom God appointed to minister in holy things, and in conformity to the custom of the idolatrous nations, make any man a priest that has a mind to the office, and will be at the charge of the consecration, though never so much a scandal to the character. Yet such, though very unfit to be priests, were fittest of all to be their priests; for what more agreeable to gods that were no gods, than priests that were no priests? Like to like, both pretenders and usurpers.

2. The adherence of Judah to God. *But as for us* (*ver. 10.*) *we have not forsaken God*. Jehovah is our God, the God of our fathers, the God of Israel, who is able to protect us, and give us success; he is with us, for we are with him: (1.) At home in his temple, we *keep his charge*, *ver. 10, 11.* we worship no images, have no priests but what he has ordained, no rites of worship but what he has prescribed: both the temple-service, and the temple-furniture are of his appointing; his appointment we abide by, and neither add nor diminish. These we have the comfort of, these we now stand up in the defence of: so that upon a religious, as well as civil account, we have the better cause. (2.) Here in the camp, he is our captain, and we may therefore be sure that he is with us, because we are with him, *ver. 12.* And as a token of his presence, we have here with us his priests, sounding his trumpets according to the law, as a testimony against you, and an assurance to us, that in the day of battle, we shall be *remembered before the Lord our God*, and *saved from our enemies*; for so this sacred signal is explained; *Numb. x. 9.* Nothing more effectual to embolden men, and put spirit into them, than to be sure that God is with them, and fighteth for them. He concludes with fair warning to his enemies. *Fight not against the God of your fathers*: It is folly to fight against the God of almighty power; but it is treachery and base ingratitude, to fight against your fathers God, and you cannot expect to prosper.

13. ¶ But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment *was* behind them. 14. And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle *was* before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. 15. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. 16. And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand. 17. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel, five hundred thousand chosen men. 18. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers. 19. And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him, Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof; and Ephraim with the towns thereof. 20. Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: And the LORD struck him, and he died. 21. ¶ But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters. 22. And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, *are* written in the story of the prophet Iddo.



We do not find that Jeroboam offered to make any answer at all to Abijah's speech; tho' it was much to the purpose, he resolved not to heed it, and therefore took on him not to hear it; he came to fight, not to dispute; the longest sword he thinks will determine the matter, not the better cause: Let us therefore see the issue, whether right and religion carry the day or no.

1. Jeroboam that trusted to his politicks was beaten. He was so far from fair reasoning, that he was not for fair fighting; we may suppose he laughed in his sleeve at Abijah's harangue. One stratagem, thinks he, is worth twenty such speeches, we will give him an answer presently to all his arguments, he shall soon find himself over-powered with numbers, surrounded on every side with the instruments of death, and then let him boast of his religion, and his title to the crown. It is probable a parley was agreed on, yet Jeroboam basely takes the advantage of it, and while he was treating, laid his ambushment behind them, against all the laws of arms. What honour could be expected in a servant when he reigned? Abijah was for peace, but when he spake, they were for war, Psal. cxx. 7.

2. Abijah and his people that trusted in their God, came off conquerors, notwithstanding the disproportion of their strength and numbers.

(1.) They were brought into a great freight, put into a great fright, for the battle was before and behind: A good cause, and which is designed to be victorious, may be in distress, and at a plunge. It was David's case, *They compassed me about like bees*, Psal. cxviii. 10, 11, 12.

(2.) In their distress, when danger was on every side, which way should they look but upwards for deliverance? and an unspeakable comfort it is that no enemy, not the most powerful or politick, no stratagem or ambushment can cut off our communication with heaven; our way thitherward is always open.

(1.) *They cried unto the Lord*, ver. 14. We hope they did that before they engaged in this war, but the distress they were in made them renew their prayers, and quickened them to be importunate. God brings his people into streights, that he may teach them to cry unto him. Earnest praying is crying. (2.) *They relied on the God of their fathers*, depended upon his power to help them, and committed themselves to him, ver. 18. The prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer, and this is that by which we overcome the world, even our faith, 1 Joh. v. 4. (3.) *The priests sounded the trumpets* to animate them by giving them an assurance of God's presence with them. It was not only a martial, but a sacred sound, and put life into their faith. (4.) They shouted in confidence of victory, the day is our own, for God is with us. To the cry of prayer they added the shout of faith, and so became more than conquerors.

(3.) Thus they obtained a compleat victory. *As the men of Judah shouted for joy in God's salvation, God smote Jeroboam and his army with such terror and amazement, that they could not strike a stroke, but fled with the greatest precipitation imaginable, and the conquerors gave no quarter, so that they put to the sword five hundred thousand chosen men*, ver. 17. more (they say) than ever we read of in any history to have been killed in one battle; but the battle was the Lord's, who would thus chastise the idolatry of Israel, and own the house of David. But see the sad effect of division: It was the blood of Israelites that was thus shed like water by Israelites, while the heathen, their neighbours, to whom the name of Israel had formerly been a terror, cried, *Aha, so would we have it*.

(4.) The consequence of this was, that the children of Israel, tho' they were not brought back to the house of David, which by so great a blow sure they would have been, had not the determinate counsel of God been otherwise; yet for that time they were brought under, ver. 18. Many cities were taken, and remained in the possession of the kings of Judah; as Bethel particularly, ver. 19. What went with the golden calf there when it came into the hands of the king of Judah, we are not told, perhaps it removed to some place of greater safety, and at length to Samaria, Hof. viii. 5. yet in Jehu's time, we find it at Bethel, 2 Kings x. 29. Perhaps Abijah when it was in his power to demolish it, suffered it to stand, for his heart was not perfect with God; and not improving what he had got for the honour of God, he soon lost it all again.

Lastly, The death both of the conquered, and of the conqueror, not long after.

1. Jeroboam never looked up after this defeat, tho' he lived two or three years after. He could not recover strength again, ver. 20. But the Lord struck him either with some bodily disease, of which he languished; or, with melancholy, and trouble of mind, his heart was broke, and vexation at his loss brought his head, probably by this time a hoary head, with sorrow to the grave. He escaped the sword of Abijah, but God struck him: there is no escaping his sword.

2. Abijah waxed mighty upon it: What number of wives and children he had before, doth not appear; but now he multiplied his wives to fourteen in all, by whom he had thirty-eight children, ver. 21. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of those arrows. It seems, he had ways by himself, and sayings of his own, which were recorded with his acts in the history of those times, ver. 22. But the number of his months was cut off in the

midst, and soon after his triumphs, death conquered the conqueror. Perhaps he was too much lifted up with his victories, and therefore God would not let him live long to enjoy the honour of them.

## C H A P. XIV.

In this and the two following chapters we have the history of the reign of Afa; a good reign, and a long one. In this chapter we have (1.) His piety, ver. 1—5. (2.) His policy, ver. 6—8. (3.) His prosperity, and particularly a glorious victory he obtained over a great army of Ethiopians that came out against him, ver. 9—15.

1. SO Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David, and Afa his son reigned in his stead: in his days the land was quiet ten years. 2. And Afa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. 3. For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: 4. And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. 5. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah, the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. 6. ¶ And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest. 7. Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls and towers, gates and bars, while the land is yet before us; because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side: so they built, and prospered. 8. And Afa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand, and out of Benjamin that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these were mighty men of valour.

Here is, 1. Afa's general character, ver. 2. He did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. (1.) He aimed at pleasing God; studied to approve himself to him; happy they that walk by this rule to do that, not which is right in their own eyes, or in the eye of the world, but which is so in God's eyes. (2.) He saw God's eye always upon him, and that helped much to keep him to that which is good and right. (3.) God graciously accepted of him in what he did, and approved it as good and right.

2. A blessed work of reformation which he set on foot immediately upon his accession to the crown.

(1.) He removed and abolished idolatry. Since Solomon admitted it, in the latter end of his reign, nothing had been done to suppress it, and so we presume it had got ground, strange gods were worshipped, and had their altars, images, and groves, and the temple service, tho' kept up by the priests, chap. xiii. 10. was neglected by many of the people; Afa, as soon as he had power in his hands, made it his business to destroy all those idolatrous altars and images, ver. 3, 5. they being a great provocation of the jealous God, and a great temptation to a careless unthinking people. He hoped by destroying the idols to reform the idolaters, which he aimed at, and not the ruin of them.

(2.) He revived and established the pure worship of God; and since the priests did their part in attending God's altars, he obliged the people to do theirs, ver. 4. he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and not the gods of the heathen, and to do the law and the commandments, i. e. to observe all divine institutions, which many had neglected, and never minded. In doing this the land was quiet before him, ver. 5. Tho' they were much in love with their idols, and very loth to leave them, yet the convictions of their consciences sided with the commands of Afa, and they could not for shame but comply with them. Note, They that have power in their hands, and will use it vigorously, for the suppression of profaneness and the reformation of manners, will not meet with so much difficulty and opposition therein as perhaps they feared. Vice is a sneaking thing, and virtue has reason enough on its side to make all iniquity stop her mouth, Psal. cvii. 42.

3. The tranquillity of his kingdom, after two constant alarms of war during the two last reigns. In his days the land was quiet ten years, ver. 1. no war with the kingdom of Israel, who did not recover the blow given them in the last reign of a great while. Abijah's victory, which was owing under God to his courage and bravery, laid a foundation for Afa's peace, which was the reward of his piety and reformation. Tho' Abijah had little religion himself, he was instrumental to prepare the way for one that had a great deal. If Abijah had not done what he did to quiet the land, Afa could not have done what he did to reform it; for *inter arma silent leges*.



4. The prudent improvement he made of that tranquillity, *The land had rest, for the Lord had given him rest.* Note, *If God give quietness, who then can make trouble?* Job xxxiv. 29. Those have rest indeed, to whom God gives rest; peace indeed, to whom Christ gives peace, *not as the world giveth*, John xiv. 27. Now (1.) Asa takes notice of this rest they had, both as the gift of God, *He hath given us rest on every side.* Note, God must be acknowledged with thankfulness in the rest we are blessed with, of body and mind, family and country: and as the reward of the reformation begun. *Because we have sought the Lord our God, he has given us rest.* Note, As the frowns and rebukes of providence should be observed for a check to us in an evil way, so the smiles of providence should be taken notice of for our encouragement in that which is good. See Hag. i. 18, 19. Mal. iii. 10. We find by experience that it is good to *seek the Lord*; it gives us rest; while we pursue the world, we meet with nothing but vexation. (2.) He consults with his people by their representatives, how to make a good use of the present gleams of peace they enjoyed, and concluded with them, (1.) That they must not be idle but busy. Times of rest from war should be employed in work, for we must always find ourselves something to do. In the years when he had no war, he said, let us build, still let us be doing. When the churches had rest, they were built up, Acts ix. 31. When the sword is sheathed, take up the trowel. (2.) That they must not be secure, but prepare for wars. In times of peace we must be getting ready for trouble, expect it, and lay up in store for it. 1. He fortified his principal cities, with walls, towers, gates, and bars, ver. 7. This let us do (saith he) *while the land is yet before us*, i. e. while we have opportunity and advantage for it, and have nothing to hinder us. He speaks as if he expected that some way or other trouble would arise, when it would be too late to fortify, and when they would wish they had done it: *So they built and prospered.* 2. He had a good army ready to bring into the field, ver. 8. not a standing army, but the militia or trained-bands of the country. Judah and Benjamin were mustered severally, and Benjamin (that not long ago was called little Benjamin, Psal. lxxviii. 27.) had almost as many soldiers as Judah, came as near as twenty eight to thirty, so strangely had that tribe increased of late. The blessing of God can make a little one to become a thousand. It should seem these two tribes were differently armed both offensively and defensively. The men of Judah guarded themselves with targets, the men of Benjamin with shields, the former much bigger than the latter, 1 Kings x. 16, 17. The men of Judah fought with spears when they closed in with the enemy; the men of Benjamin drew bows to reach the enemy at a distance, both did good service, and neither could say to the other I have no need of thee. Different gifts and employments are for the common good.

9. ¶ And there came out against them, Zerah the Ethiopian, with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots, and came unto Maresah. 10. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah and Maresah. 11. And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude: O LORD, thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee. 12. So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. 13. And Asa and the people that were with him, pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves, for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil. 14. And they smote all the cities round about Gerar, for the fear of the LORD came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities, for there was exceeding much spoil in them. 15. They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. Disturbance given to the peace of Asa's kingdom by a formidable army of Ethiopians, that invaded them, ver. 9, 10. Tho' still they sought God, yet this fear came upon them, that their faith in God might be tried, and that God might have an opportunity of doing great things for them. It was a vast number that the Ethiopians brought against him, a thousand thousand men, and now he found the benefit of having an army ready raised against such a time of need. That provision we thought needless may soon appear to be of great advantage.

2. The application Asa made to God, on occasion of this threatening cloud that hung over his head, ver. 11. He that sought God in the day of his peace and prosperity could with holy boldness cry to God in the day of his trouble, and call him his God. His prayer is short but has much in it. (1.) He gives to

God the glory of his infinite power and sovereignty. *It is nothing with thee to help*, and save, by many or few, by them that are mighty, or by them that have no power. See 1 Sam. xiv. 6. God works in his own strength; not in the strength of instruments; Psal. xxi. 13. nay, it is his glory to *help the weakest*, and *perfect strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings*. We do not say, Lord, take our part, for we have a good army for thee to work by, but take our part, for without thee we have no power. (2.) He takes hold of their covenant relation to God as theirs. *O Lord our God*, and again *thou art our God*, whom we have chosen, and cleave to as ours, and who hast promised to be ours. (3.) He pleads their dependence upon God, and the eye they had to him in this expedition. He was well prepared for it; yet trusted not to his preparations, but *Lord we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude*, by warrant from thee, aiming at thy glory, and trusting to thy strength. (4.) He interests God in their cause, *let not man* (mortal man, so the word is) *prevail against thee*. If he prevail against us, it will be said that he prevails against thee, because thou art our God, and we rest on thee, and go forth in thy name, which thou hast encouraged us to do. The enemy is a mortal man; make it to appear what an unequal match he is for an immortal God. Lord, maintain thine own honour; *hallowed be thy name*.

3. The glorious victory God gave him over his enemies; (1.) God defeated the enemy, and put their forces into disorder, ver. 12. *The Lord smote the Ethiopians*, smote them with terror, and an unaccountable consternation, so that they fled, and knew neither why nor whither. (2.) Asa and his soldiers took the advantage God gave them against the enemy. (1.) They destroyed them. They fell *before the Lord*, (for who can stand before him?) and before his host, either an invisible host of angels that were employed to destroy them, or the host of Israel, called God's host because owned by him. (2.) They took the plunder of their camp; *carried away very much spoil*, from the slain, and from the bag and baggage. (3.) They smote the cities that were in league with them to which they fled for shelter, and carried off the spoil of them, ver. 14. and they were not able to make any resistance, for *the fear of the Lord came upon them*, i. e. a fear which God struck them with to that degree that they had no heart to withstand the conquerors. (4.) They fetched away the cattle out of the enemy's country in vast numbers, ver. 15. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

## C H A P. XV.

Asa and his army were now returning in triumph from the battle laden with spoils, and adorned with the trophies of victory; the pious prince we may now suppose studying what he should render to God for this great favour; he knows the work of reformation which he had begun in his kingdom is not perfected; his enemies abroad were subdued, but there were more dangerous enemies at home that were yet unconquered; idols in Judah and Benjamin; his victory over the former emboldens him vigorously to renew his attack upon the latter; now here we have, (1.) The message which God sent him by a prophet to engage him to, and encourage him in, the prosecution of his reformation, ver. 1—7. (2.) The life which this message put into that good cause, and their doings in pursuance of it. Idols removed, ver. 8. The spoil dedicated to God, ver. 9—11. A covenant made with God, and a law for the punishing of idolaters, ver. 12—15. A reformation at court, ver. 16. Dedicated things brought into the house of God, ver. 18. All well, but that the high places were permitted, ver. 17. And the effect of this was great peace, ver. 19.

1. **A**ND the spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. 2. And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin, The LORD is with you, while you be with him, and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. 3. Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. 4. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and fought him, he was found of them. 5. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. 6. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. 7. Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

It was a great happiness to Israel that they had prophets among them; yet while they were thus blessed they were strangely addicted to idolatry, whereas when the spirit of prophecy was ceased under the second temple, and the canon of the Old Testament was



was completed which was constantly read in their synagogues; they were pure from idolatry, for the scriptures are of all other the *most sure word of prophecy*, and most effectual, and the church could not be so easily imposed upon by a counterfeit bible, as by a counterfeit prophet.

Here was a prophet sent to Aza and his army, when they returned victorious from the war with the Ethiopians, not to compliment them, and congratulate their success but to quicken them to their duty, that is the proper business of God's ministers, even with princes, and the greatest of men. The *Spirit of God came* upon the prophet, *ver. 1.* both to instruct him what he should say, and to enable him to say it with clearness and boldness.

1. He told them plainly upon what terms they stood with God: let them not think that now they had got this victory all was their own for ever, no, he lets them know they were upon their good behaviour. Let them do well, and it would be well with them, otherwise not. (1.) *The Lord is with you while you, be with him.* This is both a word of comfort, that those who keep close to God shall always have his presence with them; and also a word of caution, he is *with you while you be with him*, but no longer; you have now a signal token of his favourable presence with you, but the continuance of it depends upon your perseverance in the way of your duty. (2.) *If you seek him he will be found of you:* Sincerely desire his favour, and aim it, and you shall obtain it. Pray and you shall prevail; He never said, nor never will, *seek ye me in vain.* See *Heb. xi. 6.* But, (3.) If you forsake him and his ordinances, he is not tied to you, but will certainly forsake you, and then you are undone, your present triumphs will be no security to you; wo to you, when God departs.

2. He set before them the dangerous consequence of forsaking God and his ordinances, and that there was no way of having grievances redressed, but by repenting, and returning unto God. When Israel forsook their duty, they were over-run with a deluge of atheism, impiety, irreligion, and all irregularity, *ver. 3.* and were continually embarrassed with vexatious and destroying wars, foreign and domestick, *ver. 5, 6.* But when their troubles drove them to God, they found it not in vain to seek him, *ver. 4.* But the question is, what time this refers to?

(1.) Some think it looks as far back as the days of the judges. A long season ago Israel was without the true God; for they worshipped false gods, it was a time of ignorance, for tho' they had priests, they had no teaching priests; tho' they had elders, yet no law to any purpose, *ver. 3.* These were sad times, when they were frequently oppressed by one enemy or other, and grievously harassed by Moabites, Midianites, Ammonites, and other nations, they were *vexed with all adversity*, *ver. 6.* yet when in their perplexity they turned to God by repentance, prayers and reformation, he raised up deliverers for them. Then was that maxim often verified, that God is with us, while we are with him. Whatsoever things of this kind were written afore-time, were written for our admonition.

(2.) Others think it describes the present state of the ten tribes, who were now properly called Israel. Now since Jeroboam set up the calves, tho' he pretended to honour the God that brought them out of Egypt, yet his idolatry has brought them to downright infidelity, they are *without the true God*, and no marvel, when they were without teaching priests; Jeroboam's priests were no teachers, and thus they came to be without law: it is next to impossible, that any thing of religion should be kept up without a preaching ministry. In those times there was no peace, *ver. 5.* Their war with Judah gave them frequent alarms; so did the late insurrection of Baasha, and other occasions, not mentioned. They provoked God with all iniquity, and then he *vexed them with all adversity*, yet when they turned to God, he was intreated for them. Let Judah take notice of this, let their neighbours learn by their warnings. Give no countenance to graven images, for you see what mischiefs they are the rise of.

(3.) Others think the whole passage may be read in the future tense, and that it looks forward; hereafter *Israel will be without the true God, and a teaching priest*, and they will be destroyed by one judgment after another till they *return to God, and seek him.* See *Hof. iii. 4.*

3. Upon this he grounded his exhortation to them to prosecute the work of reformation with vigour, *ver. 7. be strong, for your work will be rewarded.* Note, (1.) God's work should be done with diligence and cheerfulness, but will not be done without resolution. (2.) This should quicken us to the work of religion, that we shall be sure not to lose by it at long run. It will not go unrewarded. How should it, when the work is its own reward?

8. And when Aza heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD. 9. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: (for they fell to him out of

Israel in abundance when they saw that the LORD his God was with him) 10. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year after the reign of Aza. 11. And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen, and seven thousand sheep. 12. And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul; 13. That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. 14. And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. 15. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about. 16. ¶ And also concerning Maachah the mother of Aza the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Aza cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron. 17. But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless, the heart of Aza was perfect all his days. 18. ¶ And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels. 19. And there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Aza.

We are here told, what good effect the foregoing sermon had upon Aza.

1. He grew more bold for God than he had been, his victory would inspire him with some new degrees of resolution, but this message from God with much more; now he took courage, he saw how necessary a further reformation was, and what assurance he had of God's presence with him in it; and this made him daring, and helped him over the difficulties which had before deterred him, and driven him off from the undertaking. Now he ventured to destroy all the abominable idols (and all idolatries are abominable, 1 *Pet. iv. 3.*) as far as ever his power went: Down with them all. He also renewed the altar of the Lord, which, it seems, was gone out of repair, tho' it was not past thirty-five years since Solomon's head was laid, who erected it. So soon did these ceremonial institutions begin to wax old, as things that in the fulness of time must *vanish away*, *Heb. viii. 13.*

He extended his influence further than before, *ver. 9.* He summoned a solemn assembly, and particularly brought the strangers to it, who were come over to him from the ten tribes. (1.) Their coming was a great encouragement to him, for the reason why they came, was because *they saw that the Lord his God was with him:* It is good being with those that have God with them, to come into relation to, and contract acquaintance and friendship with those that live in the fear and favour of God; *we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.* (2.) The cognizance he took of them, and the invitation he gave them to the general assembly was a great encouragement to them. All strangers are to be helped, but those that cast themselves upon God's good providence purely to keep a good conscience, are worthy of double honour. Aza gave orders for the gathering of them together, *ver. 9.* yet it is said, *ver. 10.* they *gathered themselves together*, made it their own act, so forward were they to obey the king's orders. This meeting was held in the third month, probably at the feast of Pentecost, which was in that month.

3. He and his people offered sacrifices to God, as his share of the spoil they had got, *ver. 11.* Their offering here was nothing to Solomon's, *chap. vii. 5.* which was owing to the diminution either of their zeal, or of their wealth, or of both. These sacrifices were intended by way of thanksgiving for the favours they had received, and supplication for further favours. Prayers and praises are now our spiritual sacrifices. And as he took care that the altar should have its gift, so he took care that the temple should have its gold; he *brought into the house of God all the dedicated things*, *ver. 18.* It is honesty to render to God the things that are his. What has been long designed for him, and long laid by for him, as it should seem these dedicated things had been, let it at length be laid out for him; will a man rob God, or make slow payment to him, who is always ready to do us good?

4. They entered into covenant with God; repenting that they had violated their engagements to him, and resolving to do better for the future. It is proper for penitents, for converts, to renew their covenants. It should seem, the motion came not from Aza, but from the people themselves; let every man be a volunteer that covenants with God. *Thy people shall be willing*, *Psal. cx. 3.* Observe,



1. What was the matter of this covenant. Nothing but what they were before obliged to; and tho' no vow or promise of theirs could lay any higher obligation upon them, than they were already under from the divine precept, yet it would help to increase their sense of the obligation, to arm them against temptations, and would be a testimony to the equity and goodness of the precept. And by joining all together in this covenant, they strengthened the hands one of another. Two things they engaged themselves to. (1.) That they would diligently seek God themselves, seek his precepts, seek his favour; what is religion but seeking God, enquiring after him, applying to him upon all occasions? We shall not enjoy him till we come to heaven, while we are here we must continue seeking. That they would seek him as the God of their fathers, in the way that their fathers sought him, and in dependence upon the promise made to their fathers; and that they would do it *with all their heart, and with all their soul*; for those only seek God acceptably and successfully, that are inward with him, intent upon him, and entire for him in their seeking of him. We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heart-work of it; God will have all the heart, or none: and when a jewel of such inestimable value, as the divine favour, is to be found, it is worth while to seek it *with all our soul*. (2.) That they would, to the utmost of their power, oblige others to seek him, *ver. 13.* They agreed, that *whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel*, i. e. would either worship other gods, or refuse to join with them in the worship of the true God, that was either an obstinate idolater, or an obstinate atheist, he should be put to death. This was no new law of their own making, but an order to put in execution that law of God to this purpose, *Deut. xvii. 2, &c.* which if it had been duly executed, there had not been so many abominable idols found in Judah and Benjamin as were, *ver. 8.* Whether men may now under the gospel, be compelled by such methods as these to seek the Lord, is justly questioned; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, and yet mighty.

2. In what manner they made this covenant. (1.) With great cheerfulness, and all possible expressions of joy, *They swore unto the Lord*, not sneakingly as if they were ashamed of what they did, or afraid of binding themselves too fast to him; but with a loud voice, to express their own zeal, and to animate one another; and they all rejoiced at the oath, *ver. 14, 15.* Did not swear to God with reluctance, as the poor debtor confesseth a judgment to his creditor; but with all the pleasure and satisfaction imaginable, as the bridegroom plights his troth to the bride in the marriage covenant. Every honest Israelite was pleased with his own engagements to God, and they were all pleased with one another's. They rejoiced in it as a hopeful expedient to prevent their apostasy from God, and a happy indication of God's presence with them. Note, The times of renewing our covenant with God, should be times of rejoicing. And national reformation cannot but give general satisfaction to all that are good. It is an honour and happiness to be in bonds to God. (2.) They did it with great sincerity, zeal, and resolution: *they swore to God with all their hearts, and sought him with their whole desire.* It was an extraordinary good frame that Israel was now in; O that there had always been but such a heart in them! This comes in as the reason why they rejoiced so much in what they did, it was because they were hearty in it. Note, Those only experience the pleasure and comfort of religion that are sincere and upright in it. What is done in hypocrisy is a mere drudgery. But if God have the heart, we have the joy.

Lastly, We are told what was the effect of this their solemn covenanting with God.

1. God did very well for them. He was *found of them and gave them rest round about*, *ver. 15.* so that there was no war of a long time after, *ver. 19.* no open general war, tho' there were constant bickerings between Judah and Israel upon the frontiers, *1 Kings xv. 16.* National piety procures national blessings.

2. They did pretty well for him. They carried on the reformation so far that Maacah the queen mother was deposed for idolatry, and her idol destroyed, *ver. 16.* This was bravely done of Aza, that he would not connive at idolatry in those that were nearest to him, like Levi, that *said to his father and mother, I have not seen him*, *Deut. xxxiii. 9.* Aza knows he must honour God more than his grandmother, and dares not leave an idol in an apartment of his palace, while he is destroying idols in the cities of his kingdom. We may suppose this Maacah was so far convinced of her sin, that she was willing to subscribe the association, mentioned *ver. 12, 13.* binding herself to seek the Lord, and therefore was not put to death, as those were that refused to sign it; great as well as small, women as well as men (which perhaps they put in with an eye to her); but because she had been an idolater, Aza thought fit to divest her of the dignity and authority she had had, and probably he banished her the court, and confined her to privacy, lest she should influence, and infect others. But the reformation was not compleat, the high places were not all taken away, tho' many of them were, *chap. xiv. 3, 5.* Those in the cities were removed, but not those in the country villages; or, those in the cities of Judah, not those in the cities of Israel, which were reduced to the house of David; or, those that were used in the service of false gods, not those that were used in the service of the God of Israel; those he connived at,

and yet his heart was perfect. There may be defects in some particular duties, where yet the heart for the main is upright with God; sincerity is something less than sinless perfection.

C H A P. XVI.

*This chapter concludes the history of the reign of Aza, but doth not represent his latter end so good as his beginning. (1.) Here is a foolish treaty with Benhadad king of Syria, ver. 1—6. (2.) The reproof which God sent him for it by a prophet, ver. 7—9. (3.) Aza's displeasure against the prophet for his faithfulness, ver. 10. (4.) The sickness, death, and burial of Aza, ver. 11—14.*

1. **I**N the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Aza, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out, or come in to Aza king of Judah. 2. Then Aza brought out silver and gold, out of the treasures of the house of the LORD, and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 3. *There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father, and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.* 4. And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Aza, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abal-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali. 5. And it came to pass when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease. 6. Then Aza the king took all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was a building, and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

How to reconcile the date of this event with the history of the kings, I am quite at a loss: Baasha died in the twenty-sixth year of Aza, *1 Kings xvi. 8.* How then could this be done in his thirty-sixth year, when Baasha's family was quite cut off, and Omri was upon the throne? It is generally said to be meant of the thirty-sixth year of the kingdom of Aza, viz. that of Judah, beginning from the first of Rehoboam, and so it falls to be the sixteenth of Aza's reign. But then *chap. xv. 19.* must be so understood, and how could it be spoken of as a great thing that, there was no more war till the fifteenth year of Aza, when that passage immediately before, was in his fifteenth year, *chap. xv. 10.* and after this miscarriage of his, here he had wars, *ver. 9.* Josephus places it in his twenty-sixth year, and then we must suppose a mistake in the transcriber here, and *chap. xv. 19.* which if we admit, the computation is easy.

This passage we had before, *1 Kings xv. 17, &c.* and Aza was several ways faulty in it. (1.) He did not do well to make a league with Benhadad a heathen king, and to value himself so much upon it, as he seems to do, *ver. 3.* Had he relied more upon his covenant, and his father's with God, he would not have boasted so much of his league and his father's with the royal family of Syria. (2.) If he had had a due regard to the honour of Israel in general, he would have found some other expedient to give Baasha a diversion, than by calling in a foreign force, and inviting into the country a common enemy, that in process of time might be a plague to Judah too. (3.) It was doubtless a sin in Benhadad to break his league with Baasha, upon no provocation, but only to get a bribe for doing it; and if so, certainly it was a sin in Aza to move him to it, especially to hire him to do it. The publick faith of kings and kingdoms, must not be made so cheap a thing. (4.) To take silver and gold out of the house of the Lord for this purpose, was a great aggravation of the sin, *ver. 2.* Must the temple be plundered to serve his carnal policies? He had better have brought gifts and offerings, with prayers and supplications, to the house of the Lord, that he might have engaged God on his side, and made him his friend; then he had not needed to have been at this expence to make Benhadad his friend. (5.) I wish Aza were not to answer for all the mischief that the army of Benhadad did unjustly to the cities of Israel, all the blood they shed, and all the spoil they made, *ver. 4.* Perhaps Aza intended not they should carry the matter so far. But they that draw others to sin, know not what they do, nor where it will end: the beginning of sin, is as the letting forth of water.

However, the project succeeded. Benhadad gave Baasha a powerful diversion, obliged him to leave off building Ramah, and betake himself to the defence of his own country northwards; which gave Aza an opportunity not only to demolish his fortifications, but to seize the materials, and convert them to his own use.



7. ¶ And at that time Hanani the seer came to Afa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. 8. Were nor the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. 9. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart is perfect towards him. Herein thou hast done foolishly; therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. 10. Then Afa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison-house; for *he was in a rage with him, because of this thing.* And Afa oppressed *some* of the people the same time. 11. ¶ And behold, the acts of Afa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12. And Afa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign, was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was exceeding great*: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. 13. ¶ And Afa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign. 14. And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours, and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries art: and they made a very great burning for him.

Here is, 1. A plain and faithful reproof given to Afa by a prophet of the Lord for making this league with Baasha. The reprover was Hanani the seer, the father of Jehu another prophet, whom we read of 1 Kings xvi. 1. 2 Chron. xix. 2. We observed several things amiss in Afa's treaty with Benhadad. But that which the prophet here chargeth upon him as the greatest fault he was guilty of in that matter, is his *relying on the king of Syria, and not on the Lord his God*, ver. 7. He thought tho' God was on his side, that would not stand him in stead unless he had Benhadad on his side; that God either could not or would not help him, but he must take this indirect course to help himself. Note, God is much displeased when he is distrusted, and when an arm of flesh is relied on more than his power and goodness. By putting our confidence in God we give honour to him, and therefore he takes himself affronted if we give that honour to another. He plainly tells the king, herein he had done foolishly, ver. 9. It is a foolish thing to lean on a broken reed, when we have the Rock of ages to rely upon. To convince him of his folly he shews him,

(1.) That he acted against his experience, ver. 8. He of all men had no reason to distrust God, who had found him such a present powerful helper by whom he had been made to triumph over a very threatening enemy, as his father before him, *because he relied upon the Lord his God*, chap. xiii. 18.—xiv. 11. What? faith the prophet, *were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host?* enow to swallow up a kingdom? and yet *because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand*, and was not he sufficient to help thee against Baasha? Note, The many experiences we have had of the goodness of God to us aggravate our distrust of him. Has he not helped us in six troubles? and have we any reason to suspect him in the seventh? But see how deceitful our hearts are! we trust in God when we have nothing else to trust to; when need drives us to him, but when we have other things to stay on, we are apt to stay too much on them, and to lean to our own understanding as long as that has any thing to offer, but a believing confidence will be in God only, when a smiling world courts it most.

(2.) That he acted against his knowledge of God and his providence, ver. 9. Afa could not be in ignorance that *the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, strongly to hold with them* (so it may be read) *whose heart is perfect towards him*; that is, 1. That God governs the world in infinite wisdom, and the creatures, and all their actions are continually under his eye. The eye of providence is quick-sighted, it runs, it is intent, it runs to and fro, it reacheth far, through the whole earth, no corner of it is from under it, not the most dark or distant; and his eye directs his hand, and the arm of his power; for he shews himself strong. Doth Satan walk to and fro in the earth? Providence runs to and fro, is never out of the way; never to seek, never at a loss. 2. That God governs the world for the good of the people; doth all in pursuance of the counsels of his love concerning their salvation, all for *Jacob his servants sake, and Israel his elect*, Isa. xlv. 4. *Christ is head over all things to his church*, Eph. i. 22. 3. That they whose hearts are upright with him, may be sure of his protection, and have all the reason in the world to depend upon it. He is able to protect them in the way of their duty; for wisdom and might are his, and he actually intends their protection: and a practical disbelief of this, is at the bottom of all our

departures from God, and double-dealing with him. Afa could not trust God, and therefore made court to Benhadad.

(3.) That he acted against his interest. (1.) He had lost an opportunity of checking the growing greatness of the king of Syria, ver. 7. *His host is escaped out of thy hand*, which otherwise would have joined with Baasha's, and fallen with it. (2.) He had incurred God's displeasure, and from henceforth must expect no peace, but the constant alarms of war, ver. 9. They that cannot find in their hearts to trust God, forfeit his protection, and throw themselves out of it.

(2.) Afa's displeasure at this reproof. Tho' it came from God by one that was known to be his messenger, tho' the reproof was just, and the reasoning fair, and all intended for his good, yet *he was wroth with the seer*, for telling him of his folly; nay, *he was in a rage with him*, ver. 10. Is this Afa? Is this he whose heart was perfect with the Lord his God all his days? Well, let him that thinketh he stands, take heed lest he fall. A wise man! and yet in a rage: an Israelite! and yet in a rage with a prophet! A good man! and yet impatient of reproof, and that cannot bear to be told of his faults! Lord, what is man, when God leaves him to himself? They that idolize their own conduct cannot bear contradiction; and they that indulge a peevish passionate temper, may be transported by it into impieties, as well as into indecencies, and will some time or other fly in the face of God himself. See what gall and wormwood this root of bitterness bore. (1.) In his rage he committed the prophet to the jail; *put him in a prison-house*, as a malefactor; in the stocks, so some read it, or into little ease. God's prophets meet with many that cannot bear reproof, but take it heinously, yet they must do their duty. (2.) When his hand was in, *he oppressed some of the people*, probably, such as owned the prophet in his sufferings, or were known to be his particular friends. He that abused his power for the persecuting of God's prophet, was left to himself further to abuse it for the crushing of his own subjects, whereby he weakened himself, and lost his interest. Most persecutors have been tyrants.

3. His sickness. Two years before he died, *he was diseased in his feet*, ver. 12. afflicted with the gout in a high degree. He put the prophet in the stocks, and now God put him in the stocks, so his punishment answered his sin. *His disease was exceeding*; it came to the height; so some. It flew up to his head; so others. And then it was mortal. This was his affliction; but his sin was, that in his disease, instead of seeking to the Lord for relief, he *sought to the physicians*. His making use of physicians was his duty; but trusting to them, and expecting that from them, which was to be had from God only, was his sin and folly. The help of creatures must always be used with an eye to the Creator, and in dependence upon him, who makes every creature that to us which it is, and without whom the most skilful and faithful, are physicians of no value. Some think, these physicians were strangers to the common-wealth of Israel, and were a sort of conjurers, to whom he applied himself as if there were not a God in Israel.

4. His death and burial. His funeral had something of extraordinary solemnity in it, ver. 14. they made a very magnificent burying for him. I am loth to think (as some do) that he himself ordered this funeral pomp, and that it was an instance of his vanity, that he would be buried like the Gentiles, and not after the way of the Jews. It is said indeed, he *digged the sepulchre for himself*, as one mindful of his grave, but I am willing to believe it was rather an expression of the great respect his people retained for him, notwithstanding the failings and infirmities of his latter days. It was agreed to do him honour at his death. Note, The eminent piety and usefulness of good men ought to be remembered to their praise, tho' they have had their blemishes. Let their faults be buried in their graves, while their services are remembered over their graves. He that said, *There is not a just man that doeth good and sins not*, yet said also, *The memory of the just is blessed*; and let it be so.

## C H A P. XVII.

Here begins the life and reign of Jehoshaphat, who was one of the first three among the royal worthies, one of the best that ever swayed the scepter of Judah since David's head was laid. He was the good son of a good father, so that at this time grace ran in the blood, even in the blood-royal; happy the son that had such a father, to lay a good foundation in him and for him. Happy the father that had such a son, to build so well upon the foundation he had laid, and happy the kingdom that was blessed with two such kings, two such reigns together. In this chapter we have (1.) His accession to, and establishment in, the throne, ver. 1; 2, 5. (2.) His personal piety, ver. 3, 4, 6. (3.) The course he took to promote religion in his kingdom, ver. 7—9. (4.) The mighty sway he bore among the neighbours, ver. 10, 11. (5.) The great strength of his kingdom both in garrisons and standing forces, ver. 12—19. Thus was his prosperity the reward of his piety, and his piety really the brightest grace and ornament of his prosperity.



1. **A**ND Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. 2. And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Aza his father had taken. 3. And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; 4. But sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel: 5. Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand, and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents, and he had riches and honour in abundance. 6. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover, he took away the high places and groves out of Judah. 7. ¶ Also in the third year of his reign, he sent to his princes, even to Ben-hail, and Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. 8. And with them he sent Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Afahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama, and Jehoram, priests. 9. And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

Here we find concerning Jehoshaphat,

1. What a wise man he was. As soon as he came to the crown, he *strengthened himself against Israel*, ver. 1. Ahab had now been three years upon the throne of Israel, an active warlike prince; the vigour of his beginning falling in with the decay of Aza's conclusion, it is probable the kingdom of Israel had of late got ground of the kingdom of Judah, and began to grow formidable to it; so that the first thing Jehoshaphat had to do, was to make his part good on that side, and to check the growing greatness of the king of Israel, which he did so effectually, and without bloodshed, that Ahab soon courted his alliance, so far was he from giving him any disturbance, and proved more dangerous as a friend, than he could have been as an enemy. Jehoshaphat strengthened himself, not to act offensively against Israel, or invade them, but only to maintain his own; which he did by fortifying the cities that were on his frontiers, and putting garisons, stronger than had been, in the cities of Ephraim, which he was master of, ver. 2. He did not strengthen himself as his father did, by a league with the king of Syria, but by fair and regular methods, on which he might expect the blessing of God, and in which he trusted God.

2. What a good man he was. It is an excellent character that is here given him, and very observable,

(1.) That he *walked in the ways of his father David*. In the characters of the kings, David's ways are often made the standard, as, 1 Kings xv. 3, 11. 2 Kings xiv. 3.—xvi. 2.—xviii. 3. But never with such a distinction as here between his first ways and his last ways, for the last were not so good as the first: his ways before he fell so foully in the matter of Uriah, (which is mentioned long after as the bar in his escutcheon, 1 Kings xv. 5.) were good ways, and tho' he happily recovered from that fall, yet perhaps he never, while he lived, fully retrieved the spiritual strength and comfort he lost by it. Jehoshaphat followed David as far as he followed God, and no further. St Paul himself thus limits our imitation of him, 1 Cor. xi. 1. *Follow me, as I follow Christ*, and not otherwise. Many good people have had their first ways, which were their best ways; their first love, which was their strongest love: and in every copy we propose to write after, as we must single out that only which is good, so that chiefly which is best. The words here will admit another reading, they run thus; *He walked in the ways of David his father, (Harephanim) those first ways*; or, *those ancient ways*: he proposed to himself for his example, the primitive times of the royal family, those purest times, before the corruptions of the late reigns came in. See Jer. vi. 16. The LXX leaves out David, and so refers it to Aza; *he walked in the first ways of his father*, and did not imitate him in what was amiss in him towards the latter end of his time. It is good to be cautious in following the best men, lest we step aside after them.

(2.) That he *sought not to Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father*, ver. 3, 4. The neighbour nations had their Baalim, one had one Baal, and another had another; but he abhorred them all, had nothing to do with them: he *worshipped the Lord God of his father*, and him only; prayed to him only, and inquired of him only; both are included in seeking him.

(3.) That he *walked in God's commandments*, not only worshipped the true God, but worshipped him according to his own institution, *and not after the doings of Israel*, ver. 4. Tho' the king of Israel was his neighbour and ally, yet he did not learn his way. Whatever dealings he had with him in civil matters, he would

not have communion with him, nor comply with him in his religion: there he kept close to the rule.

(4.) That *his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord*, ver. 6. or, *he lifted up his heart*. He brought his heart to his work, and lifted up his heart in it; i. e. he had a sincere regard to God in it. *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*. His heart was enlarged in that which is good, Psal. cxix. 32. He never thought he could do enough for God. He was lively and affectionate in his religion,  *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*; cheerful and pleasant in it, and went on in his work with alacrity; as Jacob, who after his vision of God at Bethel, lifted up his feet, Gen. xxix. 1. marg. He was bold and resolute in the ways of God, and went on with courage; his heart was lifted up above the consideration of the difficulties that were in the way of his duty, he easily got over them all, and was not frightened with *winds and clouds*, from *sowing and reaping*, Eccl. xi. 4. Let us walk in the same spirit.

3. What a useful man he was; not only a good man, but a good king: he not only was good himself, but did good in his generation, did a great deal of good.

(1.) He took away the *teachers of lies*, so images are called, Heb. ii. 18. the *high places* and the *groves*, ver. 6. It is meant of those in which idols were worshipped; for those that were dedicated to the true God only, were not taken away, chap. xx. 33. Idolatry he only abolished; nothing debauched the nation more than those idolatrous groves, or images, which he took away.

(2.) He sent forth teachers of truth. When he enquired into the state of religion in his kingdom, he found his people generally very ignorant, they *knew not that they did evil*; even in the last good reign there had been little care taken to instruct them in their duty, and therefore Jehoshaphat resolves to begin his work at the right end, deals with them as reasonable creatures, will not lead them blind-fold; no, not into a reformation, but endeavours to have them well taught, knowing that that was the way to have them well cured; in this good work, he employed, (1.) His princes; those about him he sent forth, those in the country he *sent to teach in the cities of Judah*, ver. 7. He ordered them in the administration of justice, not only to correct the people when they did ill, but to teach them how to do better, and to give a reason for what they did, that the people might be informed of the differences between good and evil. The princes or judges upon the bench, have a great opportunity of teaching people their duty to God and man, and it is not out of their province, for the laws of God are to be looked upon as laws of the land. (2.) The *Levites* and *priests* went *with the princes*, and *taught in Judah, having the book of the law with them*, ver. 8. They were teachers by office, Deut. xxxiii. 10. it was part of the work for which they had their maintenance; the priests and the Levites had little else to do. But it seems they had neglected it, pretended perhaps, that they could not get the people to hear them: well, saith Jehoshaphat, you shall go along with the princes, and they with their authority shall oblige the people to come and hear you, and then if they be not well-instructed it is your fault. What a great deal of good may be done when Moses and Aaron thus go hand in hand in the doing of it, when princes with their power, and priests and Levites with their scripture-learning, agree to teach the people the good knowledge of God and their duty. These itinerant judges, and itinerant preachers together, were instrumental to diffuse a blessed light throughout the cities of Judah. But it is said, they had *the book of the law of the Lord with them*, (1.) For their own conduct, that from thence they might fetch all the instructions they gave to the people, and not *teach for doctrines, the commandments of men*. (2.) For the conviction of the people, that they might see that they had a divine warrant for what they said, and delivered to them that only which they received from the Lord. Note, Ministers when they go to teach the people, should have their Bibles with them.

4. How happy he was in the favour of his God, who signally owned and blessed him. *The Lord was with him*, ver. 3. *The word of the Lord was his helper*, so the Chaldee paraphrase. *The Lord established the kingdom in his hand*, ver. 5. Those stand firm that have the presence of God with them. If the *beauty of the Lord our God be upon us*, that will *establish the work of our hands*, and establish us in our integrity.

5. How happy he was in the affections of his people, ver. 5. *All Judah brought him presents*, in acknowledgment of his kindness in sending preachers among them. The more there is of true religion among a people, the more there will be of conscientious loyalty. A government that answers the end of government, will be supported. The effect of the favour both of God and his kingdom, was, that he had *riches and honour in abundance*. It is undoubtedly true, tho' few will believe it, that religion and piety is the best friend to outward prosperity. And observe, it follows immediately, *his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord*. Riches and honour in abundance, proves to many a clog and an hindrance in the ways of the Lord, an occasion of pride, security, and sensuality; but it had a quite contrary effect upon Jehoshaphat: his abundance was oil to the wheels of his obedience, and the more he had of the wealth of this world, the more was his heart *lifted up in the ways of the Lord*.



10. ¶ And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. 11. Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute-silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats. 12. ¶ And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah, castles and cities of store. 13. And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, were in Jerusalem. 14. And these are the numbers of them according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valour, three hundred thousand. 15. And next to him was Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand. 16. And next to him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour. 17. And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him, armed men with bow and shield, two hundred thousand. 18. And next him was Jehozabad, and with him an hundred and fourscore thousand, ready prepared for the war. 19. These waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fenced cities, throughout all Judah.

We have here a further account of Jehoshaphat's great prosperity, and the flourishing state of his kingdom.

1. He had a very good interest in the neighbouring princes, and nations. Tho' he was not perhaps so great a soldier as David, which might make him their terror; nor so great a scholar as Solomon, which might make him their oracle; yet the fear of the Lord fell upon them, i. e. God so influenced and governed their spirits, that they had all a reverence for him, ver. 10. And (1.) None of them made war against him. God's good providence so ordered it, that while the princes and priests were instructing and reforming the country, none of his neighbours gave him any molestation to take him off from that good work. Thus when Jacob and his sons were going to worship at Bethel, the terror of God was upon the neighbouring cities that they did not pursue after them, Gen. xxxv. 5. and see Exod. xxxiv. 24.

(2.) Many of them brought presents to him (ver. 11.) to secure his friendship. Perhaps it was a tribute imposed upon them by Aza, who made himself master of the cities of the Philistines, and the tents of the Arabians, chap. xiv. 14, 15. It is probable, with the seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and the same number of he-goats, which the Arabians brought, there was a proportionable number of ewes and lambs, she-goats and kids.

2. He had very considerable stores laid up in the cities of Judah; pulled down his barns and built bigger, ver. 12. Castles and cities of store, for arms and victuals. He was a man of business, and aimed at the publick good in all his undertakings, either to preserve the peace, or prepare for war.

3. He had the militia in a very good posture; it was never in a better since David modelled it. Five lord lieutenants (if I may so call them) are here named, with the numbers of those under their command, the serviceable men, that were fit for war in their respective districts; three in Judah, and two in Benjamin. It is said of one of these great commanders, Amasiah, that he willingly offered himself unto the Lord, ver. 16. not only to the king, to serve him in this post, but to the Lord, to glorify him in it. He was the most eminent among them for religion; accepted the place not for the honour, or power, or profit of it; but for conscience sake towards God, that he might serve his country. It was usual for great generals then to offer of their spoils to the Lord, 1 Chron. xxvi. 26. but this good man offered himself first to the Lord, and then his dedicated things.

The number of the soldiers under these five generals, amounts to eleven hundred and sixty thousand men. A vast number, for so small a compass of ground as Judah's and Benjamin's lot was, to furnish out and maintain. Abijah could bring into the field but four hundred thousand, chap. xiii. 3. Aza not six hundred thousand, chap. xiv. 8. yet Jehoshaphat has at command almost twelve hundred thousand. But it must be considered, (1.) That God had promised to make the seed of Abraham like the sand of the sea for number. (2.) There had now been a long peace. (3.) The city of Jerusalem we may suppose, very much enlarged. (4.) Many were come over to them from the kingdom of Israel, chap. xv. 9. which would increase the numbers of the people. (5.) Jehoshaphat was under a special blessing of God, which made his affairs to prosper greatly. The armies we may suppose were dispersed all the country over, and each man resided, for the most part, on his own estate; only appeared oft to be mustered and trained, and were ready at call whenever there was occasion; but the commanders waited on the king, ver. 19. as officers of his court, privy-counsellors, and ministers of state.

But (lastly) observe; It was not this formidable army that struck a terror upon the neighbour nations, that restrained them from attempting any thing against Israel, or obliged them to pay tribute, but the fear of God which fell upon them when Jehoshaphat reformed his country, and set up a preaching ministry in it, ver. 10. The ordinances of God are more the strength and safety of a kingdom, than its military force, it is men of God, more than it is men of war.

### C H A P. XVIII.

The story of this chapter we had just as it is here, related in the story of the reign of Ahab king of Israel, 1 Kings xxii. There it looks one of the greatest beauties of the reign of Ahab, that he was in league with so good a man as Jehoshaphat; here it looks one of the greatest blemishes of the reign of Jehoshaphat, that he joined in affinity with so ill a man as Ahab. Here is, (1.) The alliance he contracted with Ahab, ver. 1. (2.) His consent to join with him in his expedition for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead out of the hands of the Syrians, ver. 2, 3. (3.) Their consulting with the prophets, false and true, before they went, ver. 4—27. (4.) The success of their expedition. Jehoshaphat hardly escaped, ver. 28—32. and Ahab received his death's wound, ver. 33, 34.

1. **N**OW Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joyned affinity with Ahab. 2. And after certain years, he went down to Ahab to Samaria: and Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and perswaded him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead. 3. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war.

Here is, (1.) Jehoshaphat's growing greater. It was said before, chap. xxvii. 5. he had riches and honour in abundance: and here it is said again, his wealth and honour increased upon him by piety and good management.

But, 2. Not growing wiser, else he would not have joined with Ahab, that degenerate Israelite, who had sold himself to work wickedness. What good could he get by a man that was so ill? What good could he do to a man that was so obstinately ill? An idolater, a persecuter; with him he joined in affinity, i. e. married his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah, the worst match that ever was made by any of the house of David; I wonder what Jehoshaphat could promise himself by it: (1.) Perhaps pride made the match, as it doth many a one which speeds accordingly. His religion forbade him to marry his son to a daughter of any of the heathen princes that were about him, thou shalt not take their daughters to thy sons, and having riches and honour in abundance, he thought it a disparagement to marry him to a subject: A king's daughter it must be, and therefore Ahab's, little considering that Jezebel was her mother. (2.) Some think he did it in policy, hoping by this expedient to unite the kingdoms, in his son, Ahab perhaps flattering him with hopes that he would make him his heir, when he intended no such thing.

This match drew Jehoshaphat, (1.) Into an intimate familiarity with Ahab; he made him a visit at Samaria. And Ahab, proud of the honour which Jehoshaphat did him, gave him a very splendid entertainment, according to the splendor of those times, he killed sheep and oxen for him, plain meat, in abundance, ver. 2. In this Jehoshaphat did not walk so closely as he should have done in the ways of his father David, for he hated the congregation of evil doers, and would not sit with the wicked, Psal. xxvi. 5. nor desired to eat of their dainties, Psal. cxli. 4. (2.) Into a league with Ahab against the Syrians. Ahab perswaded him to join forces with him in an expedition for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, a city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan. Did not Ahab know that that, and all the other cities of Israel, did of right belong to Jehoshaphat, as heir of the house of David? With what face then could he ask Jehoshaphat to assist him in recovering it for himself, whose title to the crown was usurped and precarious? Yet Jehoshaphat, an easy man, yields to go with him; I am as thou art, ver. 3. Some mens kindnesses are dangerous; as well as their society infectious. The feast Ahab made for Jehoshaphat, was designed only to wheedle him into this expedition. The kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

4. ¶ And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day. 5. Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver it into the kings hand. 6. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not



not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? 7. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is yet one man by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him, for he never prophesieth good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla.* And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. 8. And the king of Israel called for one of his officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla. 9. And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, sat either of them on his throne, clothed in their robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them. 10. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the LORD, With these thou shalt push Syria, until they be consumed. 11. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 12. And the messenger that went to call Micaiah, spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one assent: let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good. 13. And Micaiah said, *As the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.* 14. And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand. 15. And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me, in the name of the LORD? 16. Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master; let them return therefore every man to his house in peace. 17. (And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesie good unto me, but evil?) 18. Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD, I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand, and on his left. 19. And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner. 20. Then there came out a spirit and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him, And the LORD said unto him, Where-with? 21. And he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so. 22. Now therefore behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee. 23. Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the LORD from me, to speak unto thee? 24. And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. 25. Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governour of the city, and to Joash the kings son: 26. And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I return in peace. 27. And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Harken all ye people.

This is almost word for word the same with what we had, 1 Kings xxii. We will not repeat what was there said, nor have we much to add, but may take occasion to think.

1. Of the great duty of acknowledging God, in all our ways, and enquiring at his word, whatever we undertake. Jehoshaphat was not willing to proceed till he had done this, ver. 4. By particular believing prayer, by an unbiassed consulting of the scripture and our own consciences, and by an observant regard to the hints, of providence we may make such enquiries, and very much to our satisfaction.

2. Of the great danger of bad company even to good men; those that have most wisdom, grace, and resolution, cannot be sure

that they can converse familiarly with wicked people and get no hurt by them. Jehoshaphat here in complaisance to Ahab sits in his robes patiently hearing the false prophets speaking lies in the name of the Lord, ver. 9. can scarce find in his heart to give him a too mild and gentle reproof for hating a prophet of the Lord, ver. 7. and dares not rebuke that false prophet who basely abused that faithful seer, nor oppose Ahab who committed him to prison. They who venture among the seats of the scornful cannot come off without a great deal of the guilt, at least of the omission of their duty, unless they have such measures of wisdom and courage as few can pretend to.

3. Of the unhappiness of those who are surrounded with flatterers, especially flattering prophets who cry peace to them, and prophesy nothing but smooth things. Thus was Ahab cheated into his ruin, and justly; for he hearkened to such, and preferred them that humoured him, before a good prophet that gave him fair warning of his danger. Those do best for themselves that give their friends leave, and particularly their ministers to deal plainly and faithfully with them, and take in not only patiently but kindly. That counsel is not always best for us that is most pleasing to us.

4. Of the power of Satan, by the divine permission, in the children of disobedience. One lying spirit can make four hundred lying prophets, and make use of them to deceive Ahab, ver. 21. The devil becomes a murderer by being a liar, and destroys men by deceiving them.

5. Of the justice of God in giving those up to strong delusions to believe a lie, who will not receive the love of the truth, but rebel against it, ver. 21. Let the lying spirit prevail to entice those to their ruin that will not be persuaded to their duty and happiness.

6. Of the hard case of faithful ministers whose lot it hath often been to be hated and persecuted and ill treated for being true to their God, and just and kind to the souls of men. Micaiah for discharging a good conscience was buffeted, imprisoned, and condemned to the bread and water of affliction. But he could with assurance appeal to the issue, as all those may do who are run down for their faithfulness, ver. 27. The day will declare who is in the right, and who in the wrong, when Christ will appear to the unspeakable consolation of his persecuted people, and the everlasting confusion of their persecutors, who will be made to see in that day, (ver. 24.) what they will not now believe.

28. So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. 29. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise my self, and will go to the battle, but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went to the battle. 30. Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that were with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel. 31. And it came to pass when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel: therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God moved them to depart from him. 32. For it came to pass, that when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel: they turned back again from pursuing him. 33. And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he said to his chariot-man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host, for I am wounded. 34. And the battle increased that day: howbeit, the king of Israel stayed himself up in his chariot against the Syrians, until the even: and about the time of the sun going down, he died.

We have here, 1. Good Jehoshaphat exposing himself in his robes, thereby endangered and yet delivered. We have reason to think that Ahab, while he pretended friendship, really aimed at Jehoshaphat's life, to take him off, that he might have the management of his successor, who was his son-in-law, else he would never have advised him to enter into the battle with his robes on, which was but to make himself an easy mark to the enemy: and if really he intended that, it was as villainous a piece of treachery as ever man was guilty of, and justly was he himself taken in the pit he digged for his friend. The enemy had soon an eye upon the robes, and vigorously attacked the unwary prince, who now when it was too late wished himself in the habit of the poorest soldier, rather than in his princely raiment. He cried out, either to his friends to relieve him, but Ahab took no care of that: or, to his enemies to rectify their mistake, and let them know that he was not the king of Israel; or to God, for succour and deliverance; to whom else should he cry? And he found it was not in vain, the Lord helped him out of his distress, by moving the captains to depart from him, ver. 31. God has all mens hearts



hearts in his hand, and turns them as he pleaseth, contrary to their own first intentions to serve his purposes. Many are moved unaccountably both to themselves and others, but an invisible power moves them. 2. Wicked Ahab disguising himself, arming himself, thereby he thought securing himself, and yet slain, *ver. 33.* No art, no arms, can save those whom God has appointed to ruin. What can hurt those whom God will protect? And what can shelter those whom God will destroy? Jehoshaphat is safe in his robes, Ahab killed in his armour, for the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

## C H A P. XIX.

*We have here a further account of the good reign of Jehoshaphat, (1.) His return in peace to Jerusalem, ver. 1. (2.) The reproof given him for his league with Ahab, and his acting in conjunction with him, ver. 2, 3. (3.) The great care he took thereupon to reform his kingdom, ver. 4. (4.) The instructions he gave to his judges, both those in the country towns that kept the inferior courts, ver. 5—7. And those in Jerusalem that sat in the supreme judicature of the kingdom, ver. 8—11.*

1. **A**ND Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. 2. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer, went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD. 3. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God. 4. And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people, from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

Here is, 1. The great favour God shewed to Jehoshaphat. 1. In bringing him back in safety from his dangerous expedition with Ahab which had like to have cost him dear, *ver. 1.* *He returned to his house in peace.* Notice is taken of this to intimate, (1.) That he fared better than he had expected. He had been in imminent peril, and yet came home in peace. Whenever we return in peace to our houses we ought to acknowledge God's providence in preserving our going out and our coming in. But if we have been kept through more than ordinary dangers, we are in a special manner bound to be thankful. There was but a step perhaps between us and death, and yet we are alive. (2.) That he fared better than he deserved; he was out of the way of his duty, had been out upon an expedition which he could not well account for to God and his conscience, and yet he returned in peace, for God is not extream to mark what we do amiss, nor doth he withdraw his protection every time we forfeit it. (3.) That he fared better than Ahab king of Israel did, who was brought home slain: tho' Jehoshaphat had said to Ahab, *I am as thou art*, God distinguished him, for he knows and owns *the way of the righteous*, but *the way of the ungodly shall perish*. Distinguishing mercies are very obliging: two kings in the field together, *one taken and the other left*, one brought home in blood, the other in peace.

2. In sending him a reproof for his affinity with Ahab. It is a great mercy to be made sensible of our faults, and to be told in time wherein we have erred, that we may repent and amend the error before it be too late. The prophet by whom the report is sent, is Jehu the son of Hanani: the father was an eminent prophet in the last reign, by the same token that Aha put him in the stocks for his plain dealing; yet the son was not afraid to reprove another king. St Paul would have his son Timothy not only not discouraged but animated by his sufferings, *2 Tim. iii. 11, 14.*

(1.) He tells him plainly, That he had done very ill in joining with Ahab; *shouldst thou*, a godly man, *help the ungodly*, give them a hand of fellowship, and lend them a hand of assistance? Or, *shouldst thou love them that hate the Lord*, wilt thou lay those in thy bosom, whom God beholds afar off? It is the black character of wicked people, that they are *haters of God*, *Rom. i. 30.* Idolaters are so reputed in the second commandment; and therefore it is not for those that love God to take delight in them, nor contract an intimacy with them. *Do not I hate those*, saith David, *that hate thee?* *Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22.* Those whom the grace of God has dignified, ought not to debase themselves. Let God's people be of God's mind.

(2.) That God was displeased with him for doing this; *There is wrath upon thee, from before the Lord*, and thou must by repentance make thy peace with him, or it will be worse for thee. He did so, and God's anger was turned away. Yet his trouble in the next chapter was a rebuke to him for meddling with strife that belonged not to him: If he be so fond of war, he shall have enough of it. And the great mischiefs which his seed after him fell into

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by the house of Ahab, was the just punishment of his affinity with that house.

(3.) Yet he takes notice of that which was praise-worthy, as it is convenient for us to do when we give a reproof, *ver. 3.* *There are good things found in thee*, and therefore, tho' God be displeased with thee, he doth not, he will not, cast thee off. His abolishing idolatry with a heart fixed for God, and engaged to seek him, was a good thing which God accepted of, and would have him go on with for all this.

(4.) The return of duty which Jehoshaphat made to God for this favour. He took the reproof very well, was not wroth with the seer, as his father was, but submitted. *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* See what effect the reproof had upon him.

(1.) He dwelt at Jerusalem, *ver. 4.* minded his own business at home, and would not expose himself by making any more such visits to Ahab. *Rebuke a wise man, and he will be yet wiser*, and will take warning, *Prov. 9, 8, 9.* (2.) To atone (as I may say) for that visit he made to Ahab, he made a pious profitable visitation of his own kingdom; he went out through the people in his own person from Beersheba in the south, to mount Ephraim, in the north, and brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers, i. e. did all he could towards it. (1.) By what the prophet said, he perceived that his former attempts for reformation were well-pleasing to God, and therefore he revived them, and did what was then left undone. It is good when commendations thus quicken us to our duty, and the more we are praised for doing well, the more vigorous we are in well-doing. (2.) Perhaps he found that his late affinity with the idolatrous house of Ahab and kingdom of Israel, had had an ill influence upon his own kingdom; many, we may suppose, were emboldened to revolt to idolatry, when they saw even their reforming king so intimate with idolaters; and therefore he thought himself doubly obliged to do all he could to reduce them. If we truly repent of our sin, we will do our utmost to repair the damage we have any way done by it to religion, or the souls of others. We are particularly concerned to recover those that have fallen into sin, or been hardened in it by our example.

5. ¶ And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city; 6. And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. 7. Wherefore now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you, take heed, and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. 8. ¶ Moreover, in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem. 9. And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. 10. And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass. 11. And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the kings matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.

Jehoshaphat having done what he could to make his people good, he is here providing, if possible, to keep them so by the influence of a settled magistracy. He had sent preachers among them to instruct them, *chap. xvii. 7, 8, 9.* and that provision did well; but now he saw it further requisite to send judges among them to see the laws put in execution, and to be a terror to evil doers. It is very likely there were judges up and down the country before, but either they neglected their business, or the people slighted them, so that the end of the institution was not answered; and therefore it was necessary it should be new modelled, new men employed, and a new charge given them. That is it which is here done.

1. He erected inferior courts of justice in the several cities of the kingdom, *ver. 5.* The judges of these courts were to keep the people in the worship of God, to punish the violations of the law, and to decide controversies between man and man. Here is the charge he gave them, *ver. 6.* In which we have,

(1.) The means he prescribes to them for the keeping of them close to their duty, and those are two. (1.) Great caution and circumspection: *Take heed what you do*, *ver. 6.* And again, *Take heed and do it*, *ver. 7.* Mind your business; take heed of making any mistakes; be afraid of misunderstanding any point of law,



or the matter of fact. Judges, of all men, have need to be cautious, because so much depends upon their taking a thing right. (2.) Great piety and religion: *Let the fear of God be upon you*, that will be a restraint upon you to keep you from doing wrong; *Neh. v. 15. Gen. xlii. 18.* and an engagement to you to be active in doing the duty of your place. Let destruction from God be a terror to them, as Job speaks, *Job xxxi. 23.* and then they will be a terror to none but evil doers.

(2.) The motives he would have them consider, to engage them to faithfulness: And these are three, all taken from God, (1.) That from him they had their commission; his ministers they were. The powers that be are ordained by him, and for him. *Ye judge not for man, but for the Lord*; your business is to glorify him, and serve the interests of his kingdom among men. (2.) That his eye was upon them: He is *with you in the judgment*, to take notice what you do, and call you to an account if you do amiss. (3.) That he is the great example of justice to all magistrates: *There is no iniquity with him*, no bribery, nor respect of persons. Magistrates are called gods, and therefore must endeavour to resemble him.

2. He erected a supreme court at Jerusalem, which was advised with, and appealed to in all the difficult causes that occurred in the inferior courts, and which gave judgment upon demurrers, (to speak in the language of our own law) special verdicts, and writs of error. This court sat in Jerusalem, for *there were set the thrones of judgment*, there they would be under the inspection of the king himself. Observe,

1. The causes conuable in this court; and they were of two kinds, as with us. 1. Pleas of the crown, called here *the judgment of the Lord*, because the law of God was the law of the realm: All criminals were charged with the breach of some or other law of his, and were said to offend against his peace, his crown and dignity. 2. Common pleas, between party and party, called here *controversies*, ver. 8. and *causes of their brethren*, ver. 10. differences *between blood and blood*: This refers to *Deut. xvii. 8.* between the blood of the person slain, and the blood of the man-slayer. Since the revolt of the ten tribes, all the cities of refuge, except Hebron, belonged to the kingdom of Israel, and therefore we may suppose the courts of the temple, or the horns of the altar, were chiefly used as sanctuaries in that case, and therefore the trial of homicides was reserved for the court at Jerusalem. If the inferior judges did not agree about the sense of any law or commandment, any statute or judgment, this court must determine the controversy.

2. The judges of this court, were some of *the Levites and priests* that were most learned in the law, eminent for wisdom, and of approved integrity, and some of *the chief of the fathers of Israel*; peers of the realm, as I may call them, or persons of age and experience, that had been men of business, who would be the most competent judges of matters of fact, as the priests and Levites were of the sense of the law.

3. The two chiefs, or presidents of this court. Amariah the high-priest was to preside in ecclesiastical causes, to direct the court, and be the mouth of it, or perhaps to be last consulted in cases which the judges themselves doubted of: And Zedabiah, the prime minister of that state, in all civil causes, ver. 11. Thus there are diversities of gifts and operations, but all from the same Spirit, and for the good of the body. Some understand best *the matters of the Lord*, others *the king's matters*; neither can say to the other I have no need of thee, for God's Israel has need of both; and as every one hath received the gift, so let him minister the same. Blessed be God both for magistrates and ministers; scribes and statesmen: men of books, and men of business.

4. The inferior officers of the court, some of *the Levites* (such as had not parts to qualify them for judges) *shall be officers before you*, ver. 11. They were to bring causes into the court, and to see the sentence of the judges executed. And these hands and feet, were as necessary in their places, as the eyes and heads, the judges in theirs.

5. The charge which the king gave them. (1.) They must see to it that they acted from a good principle; must do all in the *fear of the Lord*, setting him always before them, and then they would act faithfully, conscientiously, and *with a perfect upright heart*, ver. 9. (2.) They must make it their great and constant care to prevent sin, *to warn the people that they trespass not against the Lord*, possess them with a dread of sin, not only as hurtful to themselves, and the publick peace, but as an offence to God, and that which would bring wrath upon the people if they committed it, and upon the magistrates if they did not punish it. *This do, and ye shall not trespass*; this implies, that those who have power in their hands contract the guilt of sin themselves, if they do not use their power for the preventing and restraining of sin in others. You trespass if you do not keep them from trespassing. (3.) They must act with resolution. Deal courageously, and fear not the face of man; be bold and daring in the discharge of your duty, and whoever is against you, God will protect you, *The Lord shall be with the good*. Wherever he finds a good man, a good magistrate, he will be found a good God.

## CHAP. XX.

*We have here* (1.) *The great danger and distress that Jehoshaphat and his kingdom were in from a foreign invasion*, ver. 1, 2. (2.) *The pious course he took for their safety, by fasting and praying, and seeking God*, ver. 3—13. (3.) *The assurance which God by a prophet immediately gave them of victory*, ver. 14—17. (4.) *Their thankful believing reception of those assurances*, ver. 18—21. (5.) *The defeat which God gave to their enemies thereupon*, ver. 22—25. (6.) *A solemn thanksgiving which they kept for their victory, and for the happy consequences of it*, ver. 26—30. (7.) *The conclusion of the reign of Jehoshaphat, not without some blemishes*, ver. 31—37.

1. **I**T came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them *other* beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. 2. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria, and behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is Engedi. 3. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD: 5. ¶ And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, 6. And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? 7. Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? 8. And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, 9. If *when* evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. 10. And now behold! the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldst not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not: 11. Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. 12. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us: neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee. 13. And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

We left Jehoshaphat in the foregoing chapter very well employed in reforming his kingdom, and providing for the due administration of justice, and support of religion in it, and expected nothing but to hear of the peace and prosperity of his reign; but here we have him in distress, yet that in order to such a glorious deliverance as was an abundant recompence for his piety. If we meet with trouble in the way of duty, we may believe it is that God may have an opportunity of shewing us so much the more of his marvellous loving kindness. We have here,

1. A formidable invasion of Jehoshaphat's kingdom by the Moabites and Ammonites, and their auxiliaries, ver. 1. and the surprising notice of it brought to Jehoshaphat, when he had already entred his country, ver. 2. what pretence they had to quarrel with Jehoshaphat doth not appear; they are said to come from beyond the sea, meaning the dead sea, where Sodom had stood. It should seem they marched through those of the ten tribes that lay beyond Jordan, and they gave them passage through their borders; so ungrateful were they to Jehoshaphat who had lately put his hand to help them in recovering Ramoth-gilead. Several nations joined in this confederacy, but especially *the children of Lot*, whom the rest helped, *Psal. lxxxiii. 6, 7, 8.* The neighbour nations had feared Jehoshaphat, chap. xvii. 10. but perhaps his affinity with Ahab had lessened him in their esteem, and they had had some intimation that his God was displeased with him for it, which they fancied would give them an opportunity to make a prey of his kingdom.

2. The preparation Jehoshaphat made against the invaders. No mention is made of his mustering his forces, no doubt that was done, God must be trusted in the use of means. But his great care



was to obtain the favour of God; and secure him on his side, which perhaps he was the more solicitous about, because he had been lately told, that there was *wrath upon him from before the Lord*, chap. xix. 2. But he is of the mind of his father David, if we must be corrected, yet *let us not fall into the hands of man*. (1.) He feared; conscience of guilt made him fear; those that have least sin, are most sensible of it: The surprize added to the fright. Holy fear is a spur to prayer and preparation; *Heb. xi. 7.* (2.) *He set himself to seek the Lord*, and in the first place to make him his friend. They that would seek the Lord so as to find him, and to find favour with him, must set themselves to seek him, must do it with fixedness of thought; sincerity of intention; with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him. (3.) He *proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah*, appointed a day of humiliation and prayer, that they might join together in confessing their sins, and *asking help of the Lord*. Fasting from bodily refreshments upon such extraordinary occasions, is a token of self-judging for the sins we have committed, we own ourselves unworthy of the bread we eat, and that God might justly withhold it from us; and of self-denial for the future; fasting from sin implies a resolution to fast from it, tho' it has been to us as a sweet morsel. Magistrates are to call their people to the duty of fasting and prayer upon such occasions, that it may be a national act, and so may obtain national mercies. (4.) The people readily assembled out of all the cities of Judah in the court of the temple, to join in prayer, *ver. 4.* and they *stood before the Lord*, as beggars at his door, with their wives and children; they and their families were in danger, and therefore they bring them with them to seek the Lord. Lord, we are indeed a provoking people, that deserve to be abandoned to ruin, but here are little ones that are innocent, let not them perish in the storm. Nineveh was spared for the sake of the little ones, *Jonah iv. 11.* The place they met in was the *house of the Lord*, before the *new court*, that was perhaps lately added to the former courts, some think, that which was called the *court of the women*; thus they came within reach of that gracious promise which God made in answer to Solomon's prayer, *chap. vii. 15. mine ears shall be attent to the prayer that is made in this place.* Jehoshaphat himself was the mouth of the congregation to God, and did not devolve the work upon his chaplains. Tho' the kings were forbidden to burn incense, they were allowed to pray and preach; as Solomon, and Jehoshaphat here.

The prayer Jehoshaphat prayed upon this occasion is here recorded, or part of it, and an excellent prayer it is.

1. He acknowledgeth the sovereign dominion of the divine providence; gives to God the glory of it, and takes to himself the comfort of it, *ver. 6. Art not thou God in heaven?* no doubt thou art, which none of the gods of the heathen are; make it to appear then. Is not thy dominion supreme, over kingdoms themselves, and universal, over all kingdoms, even those of the heathen that know thee not? Control these heathen then; set bounds to their daring, threatening insults. Is there not *in thy hand that power and might which none is able to withstand?* Lord, exert it on our behalf. Glorify thine own omnipotence.

2. He lays hold on their covenant relation to God and interest in him. Thou that art *God in heaven*, art the *God of our fathers*, *ver. 6.* and *our God*, *ver. 7.* Whom should we seek to, whom should we trust to for relief, but to the God we have chosen and served?

3. He shews the titles they had to this good land they were now in possession of; an indisputable title it was, *thou gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend*. He was thy friend, this is referred to, *James ii. 23.* to shew the honour of Abraham, that *he was called the friend of God*; we are *his seed*; and hope to be *beloved for the father's sake*; *Rom. xi. 28.* *Deut. vii. 9.* We hold this land by grant from thee. Lord maintain thine own grant, and warrant it against all unjust claims. Suffer us not to be *cast out of thy possession*, we are tenants, thou art our landlord, wilt thou not hold thine own? *ver. 11.* They that use what they have for God, may comfortably hope that he will secure it to them.

4. He makes mention of the sanctuary, the temple they had built for God's name, *ver. 8.* not as if that merited any thing at God's hand, for *of his own they gave him*, but it was such a token of God's favourable presence with them, as that they had promised themselves he would hear and help them when in their distress they cried to him before that house, *ver. 8, 9.* Lord, when it was built, it was intended for the encouragement of our faith at such a time as this. Here thy name is, here we are, Lord help us for the glory of thy name.

5. He pleads the ingratitude and injustice of his enemies; we are such as it will be thy glory to appear for; they are such as it will be thy glory to appear against; for (1.) They ill requite our antient kindnesses. Thou *wouldst not let Israel invade them*, nor give them any disturbance *Deut. ii. 5, 9, 19. Meddle not with the Edomites, distress not the Moabites, come not nigh the children of Ammon*, no not tho' they provoke you: yet now see how they invade us. We may comfortably appeal to God against those that render us evil for good. (2.) They break in upon our antient rights. They come *to cast us out of our possessions*, and seize our land for themselves, *O our God, wilt thou not judge them?* *ver. 12.* Wilt thou not give sentence against them, and execute

it upon them? The justice of God is the refuge of those that are wronged.

6. He professeth his entire dependence upon God for deliverance; tho' he had a great army on foot, and well disciplined, yet (saith he) *we have no might against this great company*, none without thee, none that we can expect any thing from without thy special presence and blessing, none to boast of, none to trust to, but *our eyes are upon thee*, we rely upon thee, and from thee is all our expectation. The disease seems desperate, *we know not what to do*, are quite at a loss, in a great strait, but this is a sovereign remedy, *our eyes are upon thee*, an eye of acknowledgment and humble submission, an eye of faith, and entire dependence; an eye of desire and hearty prayer, an eye of hope and patient expectation. *In thee, O God, do we put our trust; our souls wait on thee.*

14 ¶ Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation: 15. And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid, nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but Gods. 16. To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz, and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. 17. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them, for the LORD will be with you: 18. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head, with his face to the ground: and all Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD: 19. And the Levites of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

We have here God's gracious answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer; and it was a speedy answer: *while he was yet speaking, God heard*: before the congregation was dismissed, they had assurance given them that they should be victorious, for it is never in vain to seek God.

1. The spirit of prophecy came upon a Levite that was present, not in any place of eminency, but *in the midst of the congregation*, *ver. 14.* The spirit like the wind *blows where he listeth*, and on whom. He was of the sons of Asaph, and therefore one of the singers, on that office God would put an honour. Whether he was a prophet before this or no is uncertain, most probably he was, which would make him the more regarded. There needed no sign, the thing itself was to be performed the very next day, and that would be confirmation enough to his prophecy.

2. He encouraged them to trust in God, tho' the danger was very threatening, *ver. 15. Be not afraid*, you have admitted fear enough to bring you to God, now admit not that which will drive you from him again; *The battle is not yours*, it is not in your own strength, nor for your own cause that you engage, *the battle is God's*, he doth, and will, as you have desired, interest himself in the cause.

3. He gives them intelligence of the motions of the enemy, and orders them to march towards them, with particular directions where they should find them. *To-morrow* (the day after the fast) *go ye down against them*, *ver. 16, 17.* It is fit he that commands the deliverance, should command those for whom the deliverance is to be wrought; and give the necessary orders, both for time and place.

4. He assures them not that they should be the glorious instruments, but the joyful spectators of the total defeat of the enemy. You shall not need to strike a stroke, the work shall be done to your hands, only stand still, and see it, *ver. 17.* as Moses said to Israel at the Red-sea, *Exod. xiv. 13. God is with you*, who is able to do his work himself, and will do it. If the battle be his, the victory shall be his too. Let but the Christian foldier go out against his spiritual enemies, and the God of peace will *tread them under his feet*; and make him *more than a conqueror*.

5. Jehoshaphat and his people received these assurances with faith, reverence, and thankfulness. (1.) They  *bowed their heads*. Jehoshaphat first, and then all the people, *fell before the Lord, and worshipped*; receiving with a holy awe and fear of God this token of his favour, and saying with faith, be it unto us according to thy word. (2.) They lifted up their voices in praise to God, *ver. 19.* An active faith can give thanks for a promise, tho' it be not yet performed, knowing that God's bonds are as good as ready money; *God hath spoken in his holiness, I will re-joyce*, *Psal. lx. 6.*



20. ¶ And they rose early in the mourning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood, and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, Believe in the LORD your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. 21. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD, for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 22. ¶ And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah, and they were smitten. 23. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy *them*: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. 24. And when Judah came toward the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. 25. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels (which they stript off for themselves) more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. 26. ¶ And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day. 27. Then they returned every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy: for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. 28. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets, unto the house of the LORD. 29. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel. 30. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about.

We have here the foregoing prayer answered, and the foregoing promise performed, in the total overthrow of the enemies forces, and the triumph (for so it was rather than a victory) of Jehoshaphat's forces over them.

1. Never was army drawn out of the field of battle so as Jehoshaphat's army was. He had soldiers *ready prepared for war*, chap. xvii. 18. but here is no notice taken of their military equipment, their swords or spears, their shields or bows. But Jehoshaphat took care, (1.) That faith should be their armour; as they went forth, instead of calling them to handle their arms, and stand to them, to keep ranks, observe orders, and fight valiantly, he bids them *believe in the Lord God*, and give credit to his word in the mouth of his prophets, and then they should *prosper and be established*, ver. 20. That is true courage which faith inspires a man with; nor will any thing contribute more to the establishing of the heart in shaking times, than a firm belief of the power, and mercy, and promise of God. The heart is *fixed* that thus *trusteth in the Lord*, and is kept in perfect peace. In our spiritual conflicts, this is the victory, this is the prosperity, even our faith.

(2.) That praise and thanksgiving should be their vanguard, ver. 21. Jehoshaphat called a council of war, and it was resolved, to appoint *singers to go out before the army*, to charge in the front, who had nothing else to do but to praise God, to praise his holiness, which is his beauty; to praise him as they did in the temple, that beauty of holiness, with that good old doxology, which eternity itself will not wear thread-bare, *Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever*. By this strange advance towards the field of battle, Jehoshaphat intended to express his firm reliance upon the word of God, which enabled him to triumph before the battle, to animate his own soldiers, to confound the enemy, and to engage God on their side; for praise pleaseth God better than all *burnt-offering and sacrifice*.

2. Never was army so unaccountably destroyed as that of the enemy; not by thunder or hail, or the sword of an angel, not by dint of sword, or strength of arm, or any surprizing alarm, like that which Gideon gave the Midianites, but the Lord set ambushments against them, either hosts of angels, or, as bishop Patrick thinks, their own ambushments, whom God struck with such confusion, that they fell upon their own friends as if they had been enemies, and so they all went together by the ears, and no body knew why or wherefore. This God did *when his people began to sing and to praise*, ver. 22. for he delights to furnish those with matter for praise that have hearts for it. We read of his

being *angry at the prayers of his people*, Psal. lxxx. 4. but never at their praises. When they did but begin the work of praise, God perfected the work of their deliverance. What ground there was for their jealousies one of another doth not appear, perhaps there was none; but so it was that the Ammonites and the Moabites fell foul upon the Edomites, and cut them off, and then they fell out with one another, and cut one another off, ver. 23. Thus God often makes wicked people instruments of destruction to one another; and what alliances can be so firm as to keep those together; whom God designs to dash in pieces one against another? And see the mischievous consequences of divisions which neither of the contending parties can give any good account of the reason of. Those are wretchedly infatuated to their ruin, that fall foul upon their friends as if they were enemies.

3. Never was spoil so chearfully divided, for Jehoshaphat's army had nothing to do but that; the rest was done for them. When they came to the view of this vast army, instead of finding living men to fight with, they found them all dead men, and their carcases spread as dung upon the face of the earth, ver. 24. See how rich God is in mercy to them that call upon him in truth, and how oft he out-does the prayers and expectations of his people. Jehoshaphat and his people prayed to be delivered from being spoiled by the enemy; and God not only did that, but enriched them with the spoil of the enemy. The plunder of the field was very great, and very rich; they found precious jewels with the dead bodies, which yet could not save them from being loathsome carcases; the spoil *was more than they could carry away* at once, and they were *three days in gathering it*, ver. 25. Now it appeared what was God's end in bringing this great army against Judah, it was to humble them and prove them, that he might *do them good in their latter end*. It seemed at first a disturbance to their reformation, but it proves a recompence of it.

4. Never was victory celebrated with more solemn and enlarged thanksgivings. (1.) They kept a day of praise in the camp before they drew their forces out of the field. Many thanksgivings, no doubt, were offered up to God immediately; but on the fourth day they assembled in a valley, where they blessed God with so much zeal and fervency, that that day's work gave a name to the place, the valley of Berachah, *i. e.* of blessing, ver. 26. The remembrance of this work of wonder was hereby perpetuated for the encouragement of succeeding generations to trust in God. (2.) Yet they did not think this enough, but came in solemn procession, all in a body, and Jehoshaphat at the head of them, to Jerusalem, that the country as they passed along might join with them in their praises, and that they might give thanks for the mercy there where they had by prayer obtained it, *in the house of the Lord*, ver. 27, 28. Praising God must not be the work of a day only; but our praises when we have received mercy, must be oft repeated, as our prayers were when we were in the pursuit of it. Every day we must bless God; as long as we live, and while we have any being we must praise him, spending our time in that work, in which we hope to spend our eternity. Publick mercies call for publick acknowledgments, *in the courts of the Lord's house*, Psal. cxvi. 19.

5. Never did victory turn to a better account than this, for (1.) Jehoshaphat's kingdom was hereby made to look very great and considerable abroad, ver. 29. When they heard that God fought thus for Israel, they could not but say, *There is none like unto the God of Jesurun*, and *happy art thou, O Israel!* It begat in the neighbours a reverence of God, and a cautious fear of doing any injury to his people. It is dangerous fighting against those who have God with them. (2.) It was made very easy and quiet at home, ver. 30. They were quiet among themselves: Those that were displeased at the destroying of the images and groves, were now satisfied, and obliged to own, that since the God of Israel could deliver after this sort, he only is to be worshipped, and in that way only which himself has appointed. They were also quiet from the fear of insults from their neighbours, God having given them rest round about. And if he give rest, who can give disturbance?

31. ¶ And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: *he was* thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem: and his mothers name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 32. And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD: 33. Howbeit, the high places were not taken away; for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers. 34. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, who is mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel. 35. ¶ And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah joyn himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: 36. And he joyned himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber. 37. Then Eliezer the



son of Dodavah of Mareſſah, prophesied againſt Jehoſhaphat, ſaying, Becauſe thou haſt joyned thy ſelf with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ſhips were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarſhiſh.

We are now drawing towards the cloſe of the hiſtory of Jehoſhaphat's reign, for a further account of which, they who lived when this book was publiſhed, were referred to an authentick hiſtory of it, written by Jehu the prophet, *chap. xix. 2.* which was then extant, *ver. 34.* This was the general character of his reign, that he did that which was right in the ſight of the Lord; kept cloſe to the worſhip of God himſelf, and did what he could to keep his people cloſe to it. But two things are here to be lamented,

1. That the people ſtill retained a kindneſs for the high places, *ver. 33.* Thoſe that were erected to the honour of ſtrange gods were taken away, *chap. xvii. 6.* but thoſe where the true God was worſhipped, being leſs culpable, were thought allowable, and Jehoſhaphat was loth to diſoblige the people ſo far as to take them away, for as yet they had not prepared their hearts to the God of their fathers. They complied with Jehoſhaphat's reformation, becauſe they could not for ſhame do otherwiſe, but they were not hearty in it, did not direct their hearts to God in it, did not act in it from any good principle, nor with any zeal or reſolution: And the beſt magiſtrates cannot bring to paſs what they would in reformation, when the people are cool in it.

2. That Jehoſhaphat himſelf ſtill retained a kindneſs for the houſe of Ahab, becauſe he had married his ſon to a daughter of that family, tho' he had been plainly reprov'd for it, and had like to have ſmarted for it. He ſaw and knew that Ahaziah the ſon of Ahab, did very wickedly, and therefore could not expect to proſper; yet he joined himſelf with him, not in war as with his father, but in trade, went partner with him in an Eaſt-India fleet, bound for Ophir, *ver. 35, 36.* There is an emphasis laid upon the time, *after this*, after God had done ſuch great things for him, without any ſuch ſcandalous and pernicious confederacies, given him not only victory, but wealth; yet after this, to go and join himſelf with a wicked king, was very ungrateful. *After God had given him ſuch a deliverance as this, ſhould he again break God's commandments, and join in affinity with the people of theſe abominations!* What could he expect but that God ſhould be angry with him, *Ezr. ix. 13, 14.* Yet he ſends to him to ſhew him his error, and bring him to repentance, (1.) By a prophet, who foretold the blaſting of his project, *ver. 37.* And (2.) By a ſtorm, which broke the ſhips in the port before they ſet ſail, by which he was warned to break off his alliance with Ahaziah, and it ſeems he took the warning; for when Ahaziah afterwards preſſed him to join with him, he *would not*, 1 Kings xxii. 49. See how pernicious a thing it is to join in friendſhip and ſociety with evil-doers, it is a hard matter to break off from it. A man may much better keep himſelf from being taken in the ſnare, than recover himſelf out of it.

## C H A P. XXI.

*Never ſure did any kingdom change its king ſo much for the worſe as Judah did, when Jehoram, one of the vileſt, ſucceeded Jehoſhaphat one of the beſt: Thus were they puniſhed for not making a better uſe of Jehoſhaphat's good government, and their diſaffectedneſs or coldneſs at leaſt, to his reformation, chap. xx. 33. They that knew not how to value a good king, are juſtly plagued with a bad one. Here is (1.) Jehoram's elevation to the throne, ver. 1—3. (2.) The wicked courſe he took to eſtabliſh himſelf in it by the murder of his brethren, ver. 4. (3.) The idolatries, and other wickedneſs he was guilty of, ver. 5, 6, 11. (4.) The prophecy of Elijah againſt him, ver. 12—15. (5.) The judgments of God upon him in the revolt of his ſubjects from him, ver. 8, 10. And the ſucceſs of his enemies againſt him, ver. 16, 17. (6.) His miſerable ſickneſs, and inglorious exit, ver. 18—20. (7.) The preſervation of the houſe of David for all this, ver. 7.*

1. **N**OW Jehoſhaphat ſlept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Jehoram his ſon reigned in his ſtead. 2. And he had brethren the ſons of Jehoſhaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah: all theſe were the ſons of Jehoſhaphat king of Iſrael. 3. And their father gave them great gifts of ſilver and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram, becauſe he was the firſt-born. 4. Now when Jehoram was riſen up to the kingdom of his father, he ſtrengthened himſelf, and ſlew all his brethren with the ſword, and divers alſo of the princes of Iſrael. 5. ¶ Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jeruſalem. 6. And he walked in the way of the kings of Iſrael, like as did

the houſe of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD. 7. Howbeit the LORD would not deſtroy the houſe of David, becauſe of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promiſed to give a light to him, and to his ſons for ever. 8. ¶ In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themſelves a king. 9. Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he roſe up by night, and ſmote the Edomites which compaſſed him in, and the captains of the chariots. 10. So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The ſame time alſo did Libnah revolt from under his hand; becauſe he had forſaken the LORD God of his fathers. 11. Moreover, he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and cauſed the inhabitants of Jeruſalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto.

We find here,

1. That Jehoſhaphat was a very careful indulgent father to Jehoram. He had many ſons, who are here named, *ver. 2.* and it is ſaid here, *ver. 13.* they were better than Jehoram, had a great deal more wiſdom and virtue, and lived up to their education, which he went counter to. They were very hopeful, and any of them more fit for the crown than he; and yet becauſe he was the firſt-born, *ver. 3.* his father ſecured the kingdom to him, and portioned his brethren, and diſpoſed of them ſo as that they would be eaſy, and give him no diſturbance, as Abraham when he made Iſaac his heir, diſmiſſed his other children with gifts. Herein Jehoſhaphat was very kind and fair to his ſon, which might have obliged him to be reſpectful to him, and tread in the ſteps of ſo good a father: But it is no new thing for the children that have been moſt indulged by their parents, to be leaſt dutiful to them. But whether in doing this, he acted wiſely and well for his people, and was juſt to them, I cannot ſay. His birth-right entitled him to a double portion of his father's eſtate, *Deut. xxi. 17.* But if he appeared utterly unfit for government (the end of which is the good of the people) and likely to undo all that his father had done, it had been better perhaps to have ſet him aſide, and taken the next that was hopeful, and not inclined as he was to idolatry. Power is a ſacred thing, with which men may do either much good or much hurt; and therefore *detur digniori. Salus populi ſuprema lex.*

2. That Jehoram was a moſt barbarous brother to his father's ſons. As ſoon as he had ſettled himſelf in the throne, he ſlew all his brethren with the ſword, either by falſe accusation under colour of law, or rather by aſſaſſination; by ſome wicked hand or other he got them all murdered; pretending (it is likely) that he could not think himſelf ſafe in the government till they were taken out of the way. Thoſe that mean ill themſelves, are commonly without cauſe jealous of thoſe about them: The wicked fear where no fear is, or pretend to do ſo to give umbrage to their malice. It is likely, Jehoram hated his brethren, and ſlew them, for the ſame reaſon that Cain hated Abel and ſlew him, becauſe their piety condemned his impiety, and won them that eſteem with the people which he had loſt. With them he ſlew divers of the princes of Iſrael, who adhered to them, or were likely to revenge their death. The princes of Judah, thoſe who had taught the good knowledge of the Lord, *chap. xvii. 7.* are here called princes of Iſrael, as before fathers of Iſrael, *chap. xix. 8.* becauſe they were Iſraelites indeed, men of integrity. The ſword which the good father had put into their hands, this wicked ſon ſheathed in their bowels. Wo unto him that thus *foundeth a kingdom in blood*, *Hab. ii. 12.* it will prove a foundation that will ſink the ſuper-ſtructure.

3. That Jehoram was a moſt wicked king that corrupted and debauched his kingdom, ruined the reformation that his good father and grandfather had carried on; he *walked in the way of the houſe of Ahab*, *ver. 6.* made high places which the people were of themſelves too forward to make, and did his utmoſt to ſet up idolatry again, *ver. 11.* (1.) As for the inhabitants of Jeruſalem where he kept his court, he eaſily drew them into his ſpiritual whoredom; he *cauſed them to commit fornication*, ſeducing them *to eat things ſacrificed to idols*, *Rev. ii. 20.* (2.) The country people ſeem to have been more hardly brought to it; but they that would not be corrupted by flatteries, were driven by force to partake of his abominable idolatries, he compelled Judah thereto. He uſed his power for the deſtruction of the church, which was given him for the edification of it.

4. That when he forſook God and his worſhip, his ſubjects withdrew from their allegiance to him. (1.) Some of the provinces abroad did ſo, that were tributaries to him. The Edomites revolted, *ver. 8.* and tho' he chaſtiſed them, *ver. 9.* yet he could not reduce them, *ver. 10.* (2.) One of the cities of his own kingdom did ſo. Libnah revolted, *ver. 10.* and ſet up for a free ſtate, as of old it had a king of its own, *Jeb. xii. 15.* And the reaſon is here given, not only why God permitted it, but why they did it, they ſhook off his government, becauſe he had for-



faken the Lord God of his fathers, was become an idolater, and a worshipper of false gods, and they could not continue subject to him; without some danger of being themselves also drawn away from God and their duty. While he adhered to God, they adhered to him; but when he cast God off, they cast him off. Whether this reason will justify them in their revolt or no, it will justify God's providence which ordered it so.

5. That yet God was tender of his covenant with the house of David, and therefore would not destroy the royal family, tho' it was so wretchedly corrupted and degenerated, *ver. 7.* These things we had before, *2 Kings viii. 19—22.* The tenor of the covenant was, that David's seed should be visited for their transgressions, but the covenant should never be broken, *Psal. lxxxix. 30; &c.*

12. ¶ And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Aza king of Judah, 13. But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy fathers house, *which were better than thy self:* 14. Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods. 15. And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out, by reason of the sickness day by day. 16. ¶ Moreover, the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians that *were near the Ethiopians.* 17. And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance *that was found* in the kings house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz the youngest of his sons. 18. ¶ And after all this, the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. 19. And it came to pass that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases: And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers. 20. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired: howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

Here is, 1. A warning from God sent to Jehoram, by writing from Elijah the prophet. By this it appears that Jehoram came to the throne and shewed himself what he was before Elijah's translation: It is true, we find Elisha attending Jehoshaphat, and described to be he that poured water on the hands of Elijah, after the story of Elijah's translation, *2 Kings iii. 11.* but that might be, and that description given of him while Elijah was yet on earth; and it is certain, that history is put out of its proper place, for we read of Jehoshaphat's death, and Jehoram's coming to the crown, before we read of Elijah's translation, *1 Kings xxii. 50.* We will suppose the time of his departure was at hand, so that he could not go in person to Jehoram, but hearing of his great wickedness in murdering his brethren, he left this writing, it is probable, with Elisha, to be sent him by the first opportunity, that it might either be a means to reclaim him, or a witness against him, that he was fairly told what would be in the end hereof. The message is sent him in the name of *the Lord God of David his father*, *ver. 12.* upbraiding him with his relation to David, as that which tho' it was his honour, was an aggravation of his degeneracy.

(1.) His crimes are plainly charged upon him. His departure from the good ways of God, in which he had been educated, and which he had been directed and encouraged to walk in by the example of his good father and grandfather, who lived and died in peace and honour; *ver. 12.* His conformity to the ways of the house of Ahab, that impious scandalous family; his setting up, and enforcing idolatry in his kingdom, and murdering his brethren, because they were better than himself, *ver. 13.* These are the heads of the indictment against him.

(2.) Judgment is given against him for these crimes, he is plainly told, that his sin should certainly be the ruin (1.) Of his kingdom and family, *ver. 14.* with a heavy stroke, even that of war and captivity, *will the Lord smite thy people and thy children, &c.* Bad men bring God's judgments upon all about them. His people justly suffer, because they had complied with his idolatry, and his wives, because they had drawn him to it. (2.) Of his health and life. Thou shalt have great sickness, very painful and tedious, and mortal at last, *ver. 15.* This he is warned of before; that his blood might be upon his head, the watchman had

delivered his soul; and that when these things so particularly foretold came to pass, it might appear they did not come by chance, but as the punishment of his sins, and were so intended. And now, if as he had learned of Ahab to do wickedly, he had but learned even of Ahab to humble himself upon the receipt of this threatening message from Elijah; if, like him, (*1 Kings xxi. 27.*) he had *rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted*, who knows but, like him, he might have obtained at least a reprieve? But it doth not appear that he took any notice of it, he threw it by as waste-paper; Elijah seemed to him *as one that mocked.* But they that will not believe, shall feel.

2. The judgments threatened brought upon him because he slighted the warning. No marvel hardened sinners are not frightened from sin, and to repentance, by the threatnings of misery in another world, that is future and out of sight, when the certain prospect of misery in this world, the sinking of their estates, and the ruin of their healths, will not restrain them from vicious courses.

1. See Jehoram here stripped of all his comforts. God stirred up the spirit of his neighbours against him, who had loved and feared Jehoshaphat, but hated and despised him, looking upon it as a scandalous thing for a nation to change their gods. Some occasion or other they took to quarrel with him, invaded his country, but as it should seem fought neither against small nor great, but the king's house only, they made directly to that, and carried away *all the substance that was found in it*; no mention is made of their carrying any away captive, but the *king's wives and his sons*, *ver. 17.* Thus God made it evident, that the controversy was with him, and his house. Here it is only said, they carried away his sons; but we find *chap. xxii. 1.* that they *slew them all.* Blood for blood. He had slain all his brethren to strengthen himself, and now all his sons are slain, but one; and so he is weakened. If he had not been of the house of David, that one had not escaped; when Jeroboam's house, and Baasha's, and Ahab's were destroyed, there was none left; but David's house must not be wholly extirpated, tho' sometimes wretchedly degenerated, because a blessing was in it; no less a blessing than that of the Messiah.

2. See him tormented with *sore diseases, and of long continuance*, such as were threatened in the law against those that would not fear the Lord their God, *Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.* His disease was very grievous, it lay in his bowels, a continual griping of the guts; with that there was a complication of other sore diseases: it was very tedious, two years he continued ill, and could get no relief; for the disease was incurable, tho' he was in the prime of his time, not forty years old. Aza, whose heart was perfect with God, tho' in some instances he stepped aside, was diseased only in his feet; but Jehoram, whose heart was wicked, was struck in his inwards; and he that had no bowels of compassion towards his brethren, was so plagued in his bowels that they fell out. Even good men, and those who are very dear to God, may be afflicted with diseases of this kind, but to them they are fatherly chastisements; and by the support of divine consolations, the soul may dwell at ease, even then when the body lies in pain. These sore diseases seized him just after his house was plundered, and his wives and children carried away. (1.) Perhaps his grief and anguish of mind for that calamity, might occasion his sickness, or at least contribute to the heightening of it. (2.) By his sickness he was disabled to do any thing for the recovery of them, or the revenge of the injury done him. (3.) It added, no doubt, very much to his grief in his sickness, that he wanted the society of his wives and children, and that all the substance of his house was carried away. To be sick and poor, sick and solitary, but especially to be sick and in sin, sick and under the curse of God, sick and to have no grace to bear it with, no inward comfort to balance it with, is a most deplorable case.

3. See him buried in disgrace. He reigned but eight years, and then departed without being desired, *ver. 20.* no body valued him while he lived, none lamented him when he died, but wished never greater loss came to Jerusalem. To shew what little affection or respect they had for him, they would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings, as thinking him unworthy to be numbered among them, who had kinged it so ill. The excluding of his body from the sepulchres of his fathers, might be ordered by providence, as an intimation of the everlasting separation of the souls of the wicked after death from the spirits of just men. This further disgrace they put upon him, that they *made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers*, *ver. 19.* His memory was far from being sweet and precious to them, and therefore they did not honour it with any sweet odours, or precious spices, tho' we may suppose his dead body after so long and loathsome a disease needed something to perfume it. The generality of the people, tho' prone enough to idolatry, yet had no true kindness for their idolatrous kings. Wickedness and profaneness makes men despicable, even in the eyes of those who have but little religion themselves, whilst natural conscience itself, often gives honour to those who are truly pious. They that despise God, shall be lightly esteemed, as Jehoram was.



## C H A P. XXII.

*We read in the foregoing chapter of the carrying away of Jehoram's sons and his wives; but here we find one of his sons and one of his wives left, his son Ahaziah, and his wife Athaliah, both reserved to be the shame and plague of his family. (1.) Ahaziah was the shame of it as a partaker (1.) In the sin, and (2.) In the destruction of the house of Ahab, ver. 1—9. (2.) Athaliah was the plague of it, for she destroyed all the seed-royal, and usurped the throne, ver. 10—12.*

1. **A**ND the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son, king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp, had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. 2. Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem: his mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. 3. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. 4. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father, to his destruction. 5. ¶ He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel, to war against Hazael king of Syria, at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians smote Joram. 6. And he returned to be healed in Jezreel, because of the wounds which were given him at Ramah, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah the son of Jehoram king of Judah, went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab at Jezreel, because he was sick. 7. And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. 8. And it came to pass that when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah; he slew them. 9. And he fought Ahaziah: and they caught him (for he was hid in Samaria) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him, because (said they) he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who fought the LORD with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom.

We have here an account of the reign of Ahaziah, a short reign but of one year, yet long enough unless it had been better. He was called Jehoahaz, chap. xxi. 17. here Ahaziah, which is the same name, and of the same signification, only the words of which it is compounded transposed. He is here said to be forty-two years old when he began to reign, ver. 2. which could not be, for his father, his immediate predecessor, was but forty when he died; and it is said, 2 Kings viii. 26. that he was twenty-two years old when he began to reign. Some make this forty-two to be the age of his mother, Athaliah, for in the original it is, *he was the son of forty-two years*, i. e. the son of a mother that was of that age, and justly is her age put for his in reproach to him, because she managed him, and did what she would, she in effect reigned, and he had little more than the title of king. Many good expositors are ready to yield this with some few more such difficulties to arise from the mistake of some transcriber, who put forty-two for twenty-two, and the copies by which the error should have been corrected might be lost. Many ancient translations read it here twenty-two. Few books are now printed without some errata, yet the authors do not therefore disown them, nor are the errors of the press imputed to the author, but the candid reader amends them by the sense, or by comparing them with some other part of the work, as we may easily do this.

The history of Ahaziah's reign is briefly summed up in two clauses, ver. 3, 4. That his mother, and her relations were his counsellors to do wickedly, and it was to his destruction.

1. He did wickedly. Though by a special providence of God he was preserved alive, when all his brethren were slain, and reserved for the crown, notwithstanding he was the youngest of them; tho' the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they had buried his father ingloriously made him king, in hopes he would take warning by that not to tread in his steps, but would do better for himself and his kingdom, yet he was not influenced by the favours either of God or man, but walked in the way of the house of Ahab, did evil in the sight of the Lord, like them, ver. 3, 4. i. e. He worshipped the same false gods that they worshipped, Baalim and

Ashtaroth, supposing (as the learned bishop Patrick thinks) that by these dæmons, as mediators, they might have easier access to the supreme Numen, the God of Israel, or that *these they might resort to, at all times, and for all matters*, as being nearer at hand, and not of so high a dignity, but of a middle nature, between the immortal God and mortal men; deified heroes; so they worshipped them as the church of Rome doth saints and angels: That was bad enough; but I wish it were not worse; and am jealous that they looked upon Jehovah, the God of their fathers, to be altogether such a one as these of Baalim, and them to be as great, and as good, as he, and upon this account the more eligible than those; Baalim encouraged all manner of lewdness and sensuality in their worshippers, which the God of Israel strictly forbade.

2. He was counselled by his mother, and her relations to do so. *She was his counsellor*, ver. 3. and so were they after the death of his father, ver. 4. While his father lived he took care to keep him to idolatry, but when he was dead the house of Ahab feared lest his father's miserable end should deter him from it, and therefore they were very industrious to keep him tight to it, and to make him *seven times more a child of hell than themselves*. The counsel of the ungodly is the ruin of a great many young people when they are setting out in the world. This young prince might have had better advice if he had pleased, from the princes and the judges, the priests and Levites that had been famous in his good grandfather's time for teaching the knowledge of God; but the house of Ahab humoured him, and he walked after their counsel, gave himself up to be led by them, and did just as they would have him. Thus do they debase and destroy themselves that forsake the divine conduct.

3. He was counselled by them to his destruction. So it proved. Those that counsel us to do wickedly, counsel us to our destruction; while they fawn and flatter, and pretend friendship, they are really our worst enemies. They that debauch young men, destroy them. (1.) It was bad enough that they exposed him to the sword of the Syrians, drawing him in to join with Joram, king of Israel, in an expedition to Ramoth-gilead, where Joram was wounded; an expedition that was not for his honour. Those that give us ill counsel in the affairs of religion, if we take it, God may justly make them our counsellors to do foolishly in our own affairs. But that was not all.

(2.) By engaging him in an intimacy with Joram, king of Israel, they involved him in the common ruin of the house of Ahab. He came of a visit to Joram, ver. 6. just at the time that Jehu was executing the judgment of God upon their idolatrous family, and so was cut off with them, ver. 7, 8, 9. Here (1.) See and dread the mischief of bad company, and of joining in with sinners. If not the infection, yet let the destruction be feared; *Come out from Babylon*, that falling house, Rev. xviii. 6. (2.) See and acknowledge the justice of God. His providence brought Ahaziah just at this fatal juncture to see Joram, that he might fall with him, and be taken as in a snare. This we had an account of before, 2 Kings ix. 27, 28. It is here added, that he was decently buried, not as Jehoram, whose dead body was cast into Naboth's vineyard, 2 Kings ix. 26. and the reason given is because he was the son, (i. e. the grandson) of good Jehoshaphat, who fought the Lord with his heart. Thus is he remembered with honour long after his death, and some respect shewed even to his degenerate unworthy seed for his sake. *The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.*

10. ¶ But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose, and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. 11. But Jehoshabeath the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. So Jehoshabeath the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. 12. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years, and Athaliah reigned over the land.

We have here what we had before, 2 Kings xi. 1, &c.

1. A wicked woman endeavouring to destroy the house of David, that she might set up a throne for herself upon the ruins of it. Athaliah barbarously cut off all the seed-royal, ver. 10. perhaps, intending to transmit the crown of Judah after her self to some of her own relations, that tho' her family was cut off in Israel by Jehu, it might be planted in Judah.

2. A good woman effectually preserving it from being wholly extirpated. One of the late king's sons, a child of a year old, was rescued from among the dead, and saved alive by the care of Jehoiada's wife, ver. 11, 12. that a lamp might be ordained for God's anointed; for no word of God shall fall to the ground.



## C H A P. XXIII.

Six years bloody Athaliah had tyrannized; in this chapter we have her deposed and slain, and Joash the rightful heir enthroned. We had the story before much as it is here related, 2 Kings xi. 4, &c. (1.) Jehoiada prepared the people for the king, acquainted them with his design, armed them, and appointed them their posts, ver. 1—10. (2.) He produced the king to the people, crowned and anointed him, ver. 11. (3.) He slew the usurper, ver. 12—15. (4.) He reformed the kingdom, re-established religion, and restored the civil government, ver. 16—21.

1. **A**ND in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. 2. And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. 3. And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God: and he said unto them, Behold, the kings son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David. 4. This is the thing that ye shall do: A third part of you entering on the sabbath of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the doors; 5. And a third part shall be at the kings house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD. 6. But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites, they shall go in, for they are holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the LORD. 7. And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand, and whosoever else cometh into the house, he shall be put to death: but be you with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out. 8. So the Levites and all Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go out on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses. 9. Moreover, Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds, spears and bucklers, and shields, that had been king Davids, which were in the house of God. 10. And he set all the people (every man having his weapon in his hand) from the right side of the temple, to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about. 11. Then they brought out the kings son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king: and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

We may well imagine the ill posture of affairs in Jerusalem during Athaliah's six years usurpation; and may wonder that God permitted it, and his people bore it so long. But after such a dark and tedious night the returning day in this revolution was the more bright, and the more welcome; the continuance of David's seed and throne was what God had sworn by his holiness, *Psal. lxxxix. 36.* and an interruption was no defeazance; the stream of government here runs again in the right channel. The instrument and chief manager of the restoration is Jehoiada.

1. He here appears to be a man of great conduct; that reserved the young prince for so many years till he was fit to appear in publick, and till the nation was grown weary of the usurper; prepared his work beforehand, and then effected it with admirable secrecy and expedition. When God has work to do, he will qualify and spirit men for it.

2. A man of great interest. The captains joined with him, ver. 1. The Levites and the chief of the fathers of Israel came at his call to Jerusalem, ver. 2. and were there ready to receive his orders. See what a command wisdom and virtue will give men. *The Levites and all Judah did as Jehoiada commanded,* ver. 8. and (which is strange) all that were intrusted with the secret kept their own counsel, till it was executed. Thus the words of the wise are heard in quiet, *Eccl. ix. 17.*

3. A man of great faith. It was not only common equity, much less his wife's relation to the royal family, that put him upon this undertaking, but a regard to the word of God, and the divine entail of the crown, ver. 3. *The king's son shall reign,* must reign, as the Lord hath said. His eye to the promise, and dependence upon that added a great deal of glory to this undertaking.

4. A man of great religion. This matter was to be done in the temple, which might occasion some breach of rule, and the necessity of the case might be thought to excuse it; but he gave special order that none of the people should come into the house of the Lord, but the priests and Levites only, who were holy, upon pain of death, ver. 6, 7. Never let sacred things be profaned, no not for the support of civil rights.

5. A man of great resolution; when he had undertaken this business he went through with it, *brought out the king, crowned him, and gave him the testimony,* ver. 11. He ventured his head, but it was in a good cause, and therefore he went on boldly. It is here said, that his sons joined with him in anointing the young king, one of which, it is likely, was that Zecharias, whom Joash afterwards put to death for reproving him, *chap. xxiv. 20.* which was so much the more ungrateful, because he had actually a hand in anointing him.

12. ¶ Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD. 13. And she looked, and behold, the king stood at his pillar, at the entering in, and the princes, and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of musick; and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, treason. 14. Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD. 15. So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse-gate, by the kings house, they slew her there. 16. ¶ And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORDs people. 17. Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars, and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. 18. Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt-offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David. 19. And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none which was unclean in any thing, should enter in. 20. And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the kings house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. 21. And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

Here is, 1. The people pleased, ver. 12, 13. when the king stood at his pillar, whose right it was to stand there, *all the people of the land rejoiced to see a rod sprung out of the stem of Jesse,* Isa. xi. 1. when it seemed a withered root in a dry ground, to see what they despaired of ever seeing, a king of the house of David; what a pleasing surprize was it to them! They ran in transports of joy to see this sight, praised the king, and praised God, for they had with them such as taught to sing praise.

2. Athaliah slain. She ran herself upon the point of the sword of justice; for imagining her interest much better than it was, she ventured into the house of the Lord at that time, and cried, *Treason, treason,* but nobody seconded her or sided with her; *the pride of her heart deceived her;* she thought all her own, whereas none were cordially so. Jehoiada, as protector in the king's minority, ordered her to be slain, ver. 14. which was done immediately, ver. 15. only care was taken that she should not be slain in the house of the Lord; that sacred place must not be so far disgraced, nor that wicked woman so far honoured.

3. The original contract agreed to, ver. 16. In the Kings it was said Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, the people, and the king, 2 Kings xi. 17. Here it is said to be between him, the people, and the king, for he, as God's priest, was his representative in this transaction, or a sort of mediator as Moses was. The indenture was tripartite, but the true intent and meaning of the whole was, that they should be the Lord's people; God covenanted by Jehoiada to take them for his people; The king and people covenanted with him to be his; and then the king covenanted with the people to govern them as the people of God, and the people with the king to be subject to him, as the Lord's people



in his fear and for his sake. Let us look upon ourselves and one another as *the Lord's people*, and it will have a mighty influence upon us in the discharge of all our duty both to God and man.

4. Baal destroyed, *ver. 17*. They had not done so much as half their work, if they had only destroyed the usurper of the king's right, and not the usurper of God's right; if they had asserted the honour of the throne and not that of the altar; the greatest grievance of Athaliah's reign was the bringing in the worship of Baal, and supporting of that; therefore that must be abolished in the first place. Down with Baal's house, his altars, his images; down with them all, and let the blood of his priest be mingled with his sacrifices; for God had commanded that seducers to idolatry should be put to death, *Deut. xiii. 5, 6*.

5. The temple service revived, *ver. 18, 19*. That had been neglected in the last reigns; the priest and people wanting either power or zeal to keep it up, when they had princes that were disaffected to it. But Jehoiada put the offices of the house of the Lord into the proper course, and proper hands again, which in the late times had been disturbed and invaded. (1.) He appointed the priests to their courses, for the due offering of sacrifices according to the law of Moses. (2.) The singers to theirs according to the appointment of David. The sacrifices (it should seem) were offered with rejoicing and singing, and good reason; we joy in God when we receive the atonement, *Rom. v. 11*. (3.) The porters were put in their respective posts as David ordered, *ver. 19*. and their office was to take care that none who were upon any account ceremonially unclean should be admitted into the courts of the temple.

6. The civil government re-established, *ver. 20*. They brought the king in state to his own palace, and set him upon the throne of the kingdom, to give law, and give judgment, or his tutor for him. Thus was this happy revolution perfected, the generality of the people rejoiced in it, the rest were quiet, and made no opposition, *ver. 21*. When the son of David is enthroned in the soul, all is quiet, and springs of joy are opened.

#### C H A P. XXIV.

*We have here the history of the reign of Joash, the progress, and especially the period of which, was not of a piece with its beginning, nor shone with so much lustre. How wonderfully he was preserved for the throne, and placed in it, we read before; now here we are told how he began in the spirit, but ended in the flesh. (1.) In the beginning of his time, while Jehoiada lived he did well; particularly, he took care to put the temple in good repair, ver. 1—14. (2.) In the latter end of his time, after Jehoiada's death, he apostatized from God, and his apostasy was his ruin. (1.) He set up the worship of Baal again, ver. 15—18. tho' warned to the contrary, ver. 19. (2.) He put Zechariah the prophet to death, because he reprov'd him for it, ver. 20—22. (3.) The judgments of God came upon him for it. The Syrians invaded him, ver. 23, 24. He was struck with sore diseases; his own servants conspired against him and slew him; and, as a mark of infamy upon him, he was not buried in the burying place of the kings, ver. 25—27.*

1. Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem: his mother's name also was Zibeah of Beer-sheba. 2. And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3. And Jehoiada took for him two wives, and he begat sons and daughters. 4. ¶ And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD. 5. And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye haste the matter: howbeit the Levites hastened it not. 6. And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem, the collection, according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the LORD, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness? 7. For the sons of Athaliah that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God, and also all the dedicate things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim. 8. And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without, at the gate of the house of the LORD. 9. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the LORD, the collection that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness. 10. And all the princes, and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into

the chest, until they had made an end. 11. Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office, by the hand of the Levites; and when they saw that there was much money: the king's scribe, and the high-priests officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. 12. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and also such as wrought iron and brass, to mend the house of the LORD. 13. So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it. 14. And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver: and they offered burnt-offerings in the house of the LORD continually, all the days of Jehoiada.

This account of Joash's good beginnings we had as it stands here, 2 Kings xii. 1, &c. tho' the latter part of this chapter concerning his apostasy, we had little of there. What is good in men we should take all occasions to speak of, and oft repeat it; what is evil we should make mention of but sparingly, and no more than is needful.

We shall here only observe,

1. That it is a happy thing for young people when they are setting out in the world, to be under the direction and conduct of those that are wise and good, and faithful to them, as Joash was under the influence of Jehoiada, during whose time he did that which was right. Let those that are young reckon it a blessing to them, and not a burthen and check upon them, to have those with them that will caution them against that which is evil, and advise and quicken them to that which is good: and let them reckon it not a mark of weakness and subjection, but of wisdom and discretion to hearken to such. He that will not be counselled cannot be helped. It is especially prudent for young people to take advice in their marriages, as Joash did, who left it to his guardian to chuse him his wives, because Jezebel and Athaliah had been such plagues, *ver. 3*. That is a turn of life, which often proves either the making or marring of young people, and therefore should be done with great care.

2. Men may go far, in the external performances of religion, and keep long to them, meerly by the power of their education, and the influence of their friends, who yet have no hearty affection for divine things, nor any inward relish of them. Foreign inducements may push men on to that which is good, who are not acted by a living principle of grace in their hearts.

3. In the shews of devotion it is possible those who have only the form of godliness may out-strip those that have the power of it. Joash is more solicitous and more zealous about the repair of the temple than Jehoiada himself, whom he reprov'd for his remissness in that matter, *ver. 6*. It is easier to build temples than be temples to God.

4. The repairing of churches is a good work, which all in their places should promote, for the decency and conveniency of religious assemblies. The learned tell us, that in the Christian church antiently part of the tithes were applied that way.

5. Many a good work would be done that now lies undone, if there were but a few active men to stir in it, and put it forward. When Joash found that many did not come in as he expected one way, he tried another way, and that answered the intention. Many have honesty enough to follow, that have not zeal enough to lead in that which is good. The throwing of money into a chest through a hole in the lid of it, was a way that had not been used before, and perhaps the very newness and oddness of the thing made it a successful expedient for the raising of money; a great deal was thrown in, and with a great deal of cheerfulness, they all rejoiced, *ver. 10*. An invention to please peoples humour may sometimes bring them to their duty. Wisdom herein is profitable to direct.

6. Faithfulness is the greatest praise and will be the greatest comfort of those that are intrusted with publick treasure, or employed in publick business. The king and Jehoiada faithfully paid the money to the workmen, who faithfully did the work, *ver. 12, 13*.

15. ¶ But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. 16. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both towards God, and towards his house. 17. Now after the death of Jehoiada, came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king: then the king hearkned unto them. 18. And they left the house of



the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. 19. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD, and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. 20. And the spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. 21. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the LORD. 22. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son: and when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it. 23. ¶ And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. 24. For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers: so they executed judgment against Joash. 25. And when they were departed from him (for they left him in great diseases) his own servants conspired against him, for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings. 26. And these are they that conspired against him; Zabad the son of Shimeath an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith a Moabitess. 27. ¶ Now concerning his sons, and the greatness of the burdens laid upon him, and the repairing of the house of God, behold, they are written in the story of the book of the kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

We have here a sad account of the degeneracy and apostasy of Joash. God had done great things for him; he had done something for God, but he proved ungrateful to his God, and false to the engagements he had laid himself under to him. *How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!* Here is,

1. The occasions of his apostasy: when he did that which was right, it was *not with a perfect heart*, he never was sincere, never acted from a principle, but in complaisance to Jehoiada, who had helped him to the crown, and because he had been protected in the temple, and rose upon the ruins of idolatry. And therefore when the wind turned, he turned with it.

(1.) His good counsellor left him, and was by death removed from him. It was a mercy to him and his kingdom that Jehoiada lived so long. One hundred and thirty years, *ver. 15.* By which it appears that he was born in Solomon's time, and had lived six entire reigns, before this. It was an encouragement to him to go on in that good way which Jehoiada had trained him up in, to see what honour was done to Jehoiada at his death: they buried him among the kings, with this honourable encomium, perhaps it was part of the inscription on his grave-stone, that *he had done good in Israel.* Judah is called Israel, because the other tribes having revolted from God, they only were Israelites indeed. Note, It is the greatest honour to do good in our generations; and those who *do that which is good, shall have praise of the same.* He had done good towards God, not that any man's goodness can extend unto him, but he had done good towards his house, in reviving the temple-service, *chap. xxiii. 8.* Note, Those do the greatest good to their country, that lay out themselves in their places to promote religion. Well, Jehoiada finished his course with honour; but that little religion that Joash had was all buried in his grave, and after his death both king and kingdom went all to naught. See how much sometimes one head holds up, and what a great judgment to any prince or people, the death of godly, zealous, useful men is: see how necessary it is, that as our Saviour speaks, *we have salt in ourselves*, that we act in religion from an inward principle, which will carry us on through all changes. Then the loss of a parent, a minister, a friend, will not be the losing of our religion.

(2.) Bad counsellors got about him, insinuating themselves into his affections, wheedled him, flattered him, *made obeisance to him*, and instead of condoling, congratulated him upon the death of his old tutor, as his release from the discipline he had been so long under, unworthy a man, a king: they tell him he must be priest-ridden no longer, he is now discharged from *grave lessons and restraints*, he may do as he pleaseth: and (would you think it?) the princes of Judah were the men that were so industrious to debauch him, *ver. 17.* His father and grandfather were corrupted

by the house of Ahab from whom no better could be expected. But that the princes of Judah should be seducers to their king, was very sad. But they that incline to the *counsels of the ungodly*, will never want ungodly counsellors. They *made obeisance to the king*, flattered him into an opinion of his absolute power, promised to stand by him in making his royal will and pleasure pass for a law, any divine precept or institution to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding. And he hearkened to them: their talk pleased him, and was more agreeable than Jehoiada's dictates used to be. Princes, and lesser people, have been many a time thus flattered into their ruin by those that have promised them liberty and dignity; but have really brought them into the greatest servitude and disgrace.

2. The apostasy itself, *ver. 18.* They left the house of God, and served groves and idols. The princes, it is likely, had a request to the king, which they tell him, they durst not offer while Jehoiada lived; but now they hope it will give no offence; it is, that they may set up the groves and idols again, which were thrown down in the beginning of his reign, for they hate to be always confined to the dull old fashioned service of the temple. And he not only gave them leave to do it themselves, but he joined with them. The king and princes, that a while ago were repairing the temple, now forsook the temple; that had pulled down groves and idols, now themselves served them. So inconstant a thing is man, and so little confidence to be put in him.

3. The aggravations of this apostasy, and the additions of guilt to it. God sent prophets to them, *ver. 19.* to reprove them for their wickedness, and to tell them what would be in the end thereof, and so to bring them again unto the Lord; that is ministers work, to bring people not to themselves, but to God; to bring those again to him that have gone a whoring from him; in the most degenerate times God left not himself without witnesses; tho' they had dealt very disingenuously with God, yet he sent prophets to them to convince and instruct them, and to assure them that they should find favour with him if yet they would return; for he would rather sinners should turn and live than go on and die; and they that perish shall be left inexcusable. The prophets did their part, they testified against them, but few or none received their testimony.

(1.) They slighted all the prophets, they would not give ear; were so strangely wedded to their idols that no reproofs, warnings, threatnings, or any of the various methods which the prophets took to convince them, would reclaim them. Few would hear them, fewer would heed them, but fewest of all believe them, or be governed by them.

(2.) They slew one of the most eminent; Zecharias the son of Jehoiada, and perhaps others. Concerning him, observe, (1.) The message which he delivered to them in the name of God, *ver. 20.* The people were assembled in the court of the temple, (for they had not quite left it) it is likely, on occasion of some solemn feast, when this Zecharias being filled with the spirit of prophecy, and known (it is likely) to be a prophet, stood up in some of the desks that were in the court of the priests, and very plainly, but without any provoking language, told the people of their sin, and what would be the consequences of it. He doth not impeach any particular persons, nor predict any particular judgments, as sometimes the prophets did, but, as inoffensively as possible, minded them of what was written in the law. Let them but look into their Bibles, and there they would find (1.) The precept they broke, *ye transgress the commandments of the Lord*, you know you do so in serving groves and idols, and why will you so offend God and wrong yourselves? (2.) The penalty they incurred; you know, if the word of God be true you cannot prosper in this evil way; never expect to do ill and fare well. Nay, you find already that *because you have forsaken the Lord, he hath forsaken you*, as he told you he would, *Deut. xxix. 25.—xxx. 16, 17.* This is the work of ministers by the word of God as a lamp, and a light to discover the sin of men, and expound the providences of God.

(2.) The barbarous treatment they gave him for his kindness and faithfulness in delivering this message to them, *ver. 21.* By the conspiracy of the princes, or some of their party, and by the commandments of the king, who thought himself affronted by this fair warning, they stoned him to death immediately, not under colour of law, accusing him as a blasphemer, a traitor, or a false prophet; but in a popular tumult, in the court of the house of the Lord; as horrid a piece of wickedness, as perhaps any we read of in all the history of the kings. The person was sacred, a priest; the place sacred, the court of the temple, the inner court, between the porch and the altar; the message yet more sacred, we have reason to think, that they knew it came from the spirit of prophecy; the reproof was just, the warning fair, both backed with scripture, and the delivery very gentle and tender; and yet so impudently and daringly do they defy God himself, that nothing less than the blood of the prophet, can satisfy their indignation at the prophecy. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and tremble, O earth, that ever such a villainy should be committed by men, by Israelites, in contempt and violation of every thing that is just, honourable, and sacred! That a king, a king in covenant with God, should command the murder of one, whom it was his office to protect and countenance! The Jews say, there were



were seven transgressions in this; for they killed a priest, a prophet, a judge, they shed innocent blood, polluted the court of the temple, the sabbath, and the day of expiation; for on that day, their tradition faith, this happened.

(3.) The aggravation of this sin: That this Zecharias, who suffered martyrdom for his faithfulness to God and his country, was the son of Jehoiada, who had done so much good in Israel, and, particularly, had been as a father to Joash, *ver. 22.* The affront done by it to God, and contempt put on religion, is not so particularly taken notice of, as the ingratitude there was in it to the memory of Jehoiada. He remembered not the kindness of the father, but slew the son for doing his duty, and what the father would have done, if he had been there. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse.

(5.) The dying martyr's prophetic imprecation of vengeance upon his murderers; *The Lord look upon it and require it!* This came not from a spirit of revenge, but a spirit of prophecy, *he will require it.* This would be the continual cry of the blood they shed, as Abel's blood cried against Cain: let the God to whom vengeance belongs demand blood for blood. He will do it, for he is righteous. This precious blood was reckoned for presently in the judgments that came upon this apostate prince; it came into the account afterwards in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans: their misusing the prophets was that which brought upon them ruin without remedy, *chap. xxxvi. 16.* nay, our Saviour makes the persecutors of him and his gospel answerable for the blood of this Zecharias; so loud, so long doth the blood of the martyrs cry, see *Matth. xxiii. 35.* such as this is the cry of the souls under the altar, *Rev. vi. 10.* *How long ere thou avenge our blood?* for it shall not always go unrevenged.

Lastly, The judgments of God which came upon Joash for this aggravated wickedness of his.

1. A small army of Syrians, made themselves masters of Jerusalem, destroyed the princes, plundered the city, and sent the spoil of it to Damascus, *ver. 23, 24.* God's people while they kept in with God, had often been conquerors, when the enemy had the advantage of the greater number, but now, on the contrary, an inconsiderable handful of Syrians, routed a *very great host of Israelites, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers;* and then they were not only put upon the level with their enemies, but stood upon the utmost disadvantage, for their God not only departed from them, but turned to be their enemy and fought against them. The Syrians were employed as instruments in God's hand to execute judgments against Joash, tho' they little thought so, *Isa. x. 6, 7.* and see *Deut. xxxii. 30.*

2. God smote him with great diseases, of body, or mind, or both; either like his grandfather, *chap. xxi. 18.* or like Saul, an evil spirit from God troubling him. While he was plagued with the Syrians, he thought, if he could but get clear of them, he should do well enough: But before they departed from him, God smote him with diseases. If vengeance pursue men, the end of one trouble will but be the beginning of another.

3. His own servants conspired against him. Perhaps he began to hope his disease would be cured, he was but a middle-aged man, and might recover it; but *he that cometh up out of the pit, shall fall into the snare;* when he thought he should escape death by sickness, he met it by the sword, they slew him in his bed, for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada; by which it should seem that he did not only slay Zecharias, but others of the sons of Jehoiada for his sake. Perhaps, they that slew him intended to take vengeance for that blood, however that was it which God intended in permitting them to do it. Those that drink the blood of the saints shall have their own blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. The regicides are here named, *ver. 26.* and it is observable that the mothers of them both were foreigners, one an Ammonitess, and the other a Moabitess. The idolatrous kings, it is likely, countenanced those marriages which the law prohibited for the prevention of idolatry, and see how the products of them turned upon themselves.

4. His people would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings, because he had stained his honour by his male-administration. *Let him not be written with the righteous,* *Psal. lxxix. 28.* These judgments are called the *burthens laid upon him,* *ver. 27.* for the wrath of God is a heavy burthen, too heavy for any man to bear. Or, it may be meant of the threatnings denounced against him by the prophets, for those are called burthens; usually God sets some special marks of his displeasure upon apostates in this life for warning to all to remember Lot's wife.

#### C H A P. XXV.

*Amaziah's reign is recorded in this chapter; none of the worst; and yet far from good. Most of the passages in this chapter we had before more briefly related, 2 Kings xiv. Here we find Amaziah*

(1.) *A just revenger of his father's death,* *ver. 1—4.* (2.) *An obedient observer of the command of God,* *ver. 5—10.* (3.) *A cruel conqueror of the Edomites,* *ver. 11—13.* (4.) *A foolish worshipper of the gods of Edom, and impatient of reproof for it,* *ver. 14—16.* (5.) *Rashly challenging the king of Israel, and smarting for his rashness,* *ver. 17—24.* And lastly, *ending his days ingloriously,* *ver. 25—28.*

1. **A** MAZIAH was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mothers name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 2. And he did *that which was right in the sight of the LORD,* but not with a perfect heart. 3. ¶ Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father. 4. But he slew not their children, but *did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.* 5. ¶ Moreover, Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbred them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield. 6. He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel, for an hundred talents of silver. 7. But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the LORD is not with Israel, *to wit, with all the children of Ephraim.* 8. But if thou wilt go, *do it,* be strong for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down. 9. And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this. 10. Then Amaziah separated them, *to wit,* the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger. 11. ¶ And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand. 12. And other ten thousand left alive, did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they were broken all in pieces. 13. ¶ But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria, even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

Here is, 1. The general character of Amaziah, *He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord,* worshipped the true God, kept the temple-service a going, and countenanced religion in his kingdom; but he did not do it *with a perfect heart,* *ver. 2.* *i. e.* he was not a man of serious piety or devotion himself, nor had he any zeal for the exercises of religion. He was no enemy to it, but a cool and indifferent friend: The character of too many in this Laodicean age. They do that which is good, but not with the heart, not with a perfect heart.

2. A necessary piece of justice which he did upon the traitors that murdered his father; he put them to death, *ver. 3.* Tho' we should suppose they intended to avenge on their king the death of the prophet, as was intimated, *chap. xxiv. 25.* yet that would by no means justify their wickedness; for they were not the avengers, but presumptuously took God's work out of his hands. And therefore Amaziah did what became him in calling them to an account for it; but kept within the rule of that law which forbade the putting the children to death for the parents sin, *ver. 4.*

3. An expedition of his against the Edomites, who some ago had revolted from under the dominion of Judah, to which he attempted to reduce them. Observe,

1. The great preparation he made for this expedition.

(1.) He mustered his own forces, and marshalled them, *ver. 5.* and found Judah and Benjamin in all but three hundred thousand men, that were fit for war, whereas in Jehoshaphat's time, fifty or sixty years before, they were four times as many; sin weakens a people, diminishes them, dispirits them, and lessens their number and figure.

(2.) He hired auxiliary troops out of the kingdom of Israel, *ver. 6.* Finding his own kingdom defective in men, he thought to make it up with his money, and therefore took into his pay one hundred thousand Israelites. If he had advised with any of his prophets before he did this, or had but considered how little any of his ancestors got by their alliances with Israel, he would not have had this to undo again. But rashness makes work for repentance.

2. The command which God sent by a prophet to dismiss out of his service the forces of Israel, *ver. 7, 8.* He would not have him



him call in any assistance at all, it looked like distrust of God; if he made sure of his presence, the army he had of his own was sufficient; but particularly, he must not take in their assistance, for the Lord is not with the children of Ephraim, because they are not with him, but worship the calves. This was a good reason why he should not make use of them, because he could not depend upon them to do him any service. What good could be expected from them that had not God with them, nor his blessing upon their undertakings? It is comfortable employing those that we have reason to hope have an interest in heaven; and dangerous associating with those from whom the Lord is departed. The prophet threatened him, that if he persisted in his resolution to take these idolatrous apostate Israelites with him in hopes thereby to make himself strong for the battle, it was at his peril, they would prove a dead weight to his army, would sink and betray it; *God shall make thee fall before the enemy*, and these Israelites will be the ruin of thy cause; for God has power to help thee without them, and to cast thee down, tho' thou hast them with thee.

3. The objection which Amaziah made against this command, and the satisfactory answer which the prophet gave to that objection, *ver. 9.* The king had remitted one hundred talents to the men of Israel for advance-money. Now, saith he, if I send them back, I shall lose that; *but what shall we do for the hundred talents?* This is an objection men often make against their duty, they are afraid of losing by it: Never heed that, saith the prophet, *the Lord is able to give thee much more than this*, and thou mayst depend upon it: He will not see thee lose by him. What is one hundred talents between thee and him? He hath ways enow to make up the loss to thee, it is below thee to speak of it. Note, A firm belief of God's all-sufficiency to bear us out in our duty, and to make up all the loss and damage we sustain in his service abundantly to our advantage, will make his yoke very easy, and his burthen very light. What is it to trust in God, but to be willing to venture the loss of any thing for him, in confidence of the goodness of the security he gives us that we shall not lose by him, but it shall be made up to us in kind or kindness. When we grudge to part with any thing for God and our religion, this should satisfy us, that God is able to give us much more than this. He is just, and he is good, and he is solvent. This king lost one hundred talents by his obedience; and we find just that sum given to his grandson Jotham as a present, *chap. xxvii. 5.* then the principal was repaid, and for interest ten thousand measures of wheat, and as many of barley.

4. His obedience to the command of God, which is upon record to his honour. He would rather lose his money, disoblige his allies, and knock off a fourth part of his army just as they were going to take the field, than offend God. *He separated the army of Ephraim, to go home again, ver. 10.* And they went home in great anger, taking it as a mighty affront thus to be made fools of, and to be cashiered as men not fit to be employed, and being perhaps disappointed of the advantages they promised themselves in spoil and plunder, by joining with Judah against Edom. Men are apt to resent that which toucheth them in their profit or reputation, tho' it free them from trouble.

5. His triumphs over the Edomites, *ver. 11, 12.* Ten thousand men he left dead upon the spot in the field of battle; ten thousand more he took prisoners, and barbarously killed them all by throwing them down some steep and craggy precipice. What provocation he had to exercise this cruelty towards them, we are not told; but it was certainly very severe.

6. The mischief which the disbanded soldiers of Israel did to the cities of Judah, either in their return, or soon after, *ver. 13.* They took it so heinously to be sent home, that if they might not go to share with Judah in the spoil of Edom, they would make a prey of Judah. Several cities that lay upon the borders they plundered, and killed three thousand men that made resistance. But why should God suffer this to be done? Was it not in obedience to him that they were sent home, and yet shall the country thus suffer by it? Surely God's way is in the sea! Did not the prophet say, that God was not with the children of Ephraim, and yet they are suffered to prevail against Judah? Doubtless, God intended hereby to chastise those cities of Judah for their idolatries, which were found most in those parts that lay next to Israel. The men of Israel had corrupted them, and now they were made a plague to them: Satan both tempts, and torments.

14. ¶ Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them. 15. Wherefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, *Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?* 16. And it came to pass as he talked with him, that *the king* said unto him, *Art thou made of the king's counsel?* forbear; why shouldst thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that

God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

Here is, 1. The revolt of Amaziah from the God of Israel to the gods of the Edomites. Egregious folly! Ahaz worshipped the gods of those that had conquered him, he had some little colour for that, *chap. xxviii. 23.* But to worship the gods of those whom he had conquered, who could not protect their own worshippers, was the greatest nonsense that could be. What did he see in the gods of the children of Seir that would tempt him to set them up for *his gods*, and *bow down himself before them?* *ver. 14.* If he had cast the idols down from the rock, and broken them to pieces instead of the prisoners, he had discovered more of the piety, as well as more of the pity of an Israelite: But perhaps for that barbarous inhumanity, he was given up to this ridiculous idolatry.

2. The reproof which God sent to him by a prophet for this sin. The anger of the Lord was kindled against him, and justly; yet before he sent to destroy him, he sent to convince and reclaim him, and so to prevent his destruction: The prophet reasoned with him very fairly, and very mildly, *Why hast thou sought the favour of those gods which could not deliver their own people?* *ver. 15.* If men would but duly consider the inability of all those things to help them which they have recourse to when they forsake God, they would not be such enemies to themselves.

3. The check he gave to the reprover, *ver. 16.* He could say nothing in excuse of his own folly: The reproof was too just to be answered, but he fell into a passion with the reprover; (1.) He taunted him as saucy and impertinent, and meddling with that which did not belong to him; *art thou made of the king's counsel?* Could not a man speak reason to him, but he must be upbraided as usurping the place of a privy-counsellor? But as a prophet, he really was made of the king's counsel by the king of kings, in duty to whom the king was bound not only to hear, but to ask and take his counsel. (2.) He silenced him: bid him forbear, and say not a word more to him. *He said to the seer, see not, Isa. xxx. 10.* Men would gladly have their prophets thus under their girdles, as we say, to speak just when, and what they would have them speak, and not otherwise. (3.) He threatened him, *Why shouldst thou be smitten?* It is at thy peril, if thou sayest a word more of this matter. He seems to mind him of Zechariah's fate in the last reign, who was put to death for making bold with the king, and bids him take warning by him. Thus he justifies the killing of that prophet by menacing this, and so in effect makes himself guilty of the blood of both. The prophet which had ordered him to send back the army of Israel, tho' he contradicted his politicks, and lost him a hundred talents, yet he hearkened to, and was ruled by, *ver. 10.* But this prophet, who dissuaded him from worshipping the gods of the Edomites, he run upon with an unaccountable rage. Which must be attributed to the witchcraft of idolatry. He was easily persuaded to part with his talents of silver, but by no means with his gods of silver.

4. The doom which the prophet passed upon him for this. He had more to say to him by way of instruction and advice; but finding him kick thus against the pricks, he forbore. He is *joined to idols, let him alone, Hos. iv. 17.* Miserable is the condition of that man with whom the blessed Spirit by ministers and conscience, forbears to strive, *Gen. vi. 3.* And both the reprovers in the gate, and that in the bosom, if long brow-beaten and baffled, will at length forbear, so *I gave them up to their own hearts lusts.* The secure sinner, perhaps, values himself upon it as a noble and happy achievement to have silenced his reprovers and monitors, and to get clear of them; but what comes of it? *I know that God has determined to destroy thee;* it is a plain indication thou art marked for ruin, *that thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my counsel.* They that are deaf to reproof, are ripening apace for destruction, *Prov. xxix. 1.*

17. ¶ Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face. 18. And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon, sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle. 19. Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites, and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home, why shouldst thou meddle to thine hurt, that thou shouldst fall, *even thou*, and Judah with thee? 20. But Amaziah would not hear, for it came of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they fought after the gods of Edom. 21. So Joash the king of Israel went up, and they saw one another in the face, *both he and Amaziah king of Judah*, at Beth-shean, which *belongeth* to Judah. 22. And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every



every man to his tent. 23. And Joash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shehem, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, from the gate of Ephraim to the corner-gate; four hundred cubits. 24. And he took all the gold, and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom and the treasures of the kings house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria. 25. ¶ And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, lived after the death of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, fifteen years. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, are they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? 27. ¶ Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him and slew him there. 28. And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

We have here this degenerate prince mortified by his neighbour, and murdered by his own subjects.

1. Never was proud prince more soundly mortified than Amaziah was by Joash, king of Israel. This part of the story was as fully related, 2 Kings xiv. 8, &c. as it is here. The foolish challenge which Amaziah sent to Joash, ver. 17. his haughty scornful answer to it, ver. 18. with the friendly advice he gave him to sit still, and know when he was well, ver. 19. his wilful persisting in his challenge, ver. 20, 21. the defeat that was given him, ver. 22. and the calamity he brought upon himself and his city thereby, ver. 23, 24. Now this story verifies two of Solomon's proverbs, (1.) That a man's pride will bring him low, Prov. xxix. 23. it goes before his destruction, not only procures it meritoriously, *He that exalteth himself shall be abased*, but is oft the immediate occasion of it. (2.) That he that goes forth hastily to strive, perhaps will not know what to do in the end thereof, when his neighbour has put him to shame, Prov. xxv. 8. He that is fond of contention, may have enough of it sooner than he thinks of.

But here are two passages in this story, which we had not before in the Kings. (1.) That Amaziah took advice, before he challenged the king of Israel, ver. 17. But of whom? Not of the prophet, he was not made of the king's counsel; but of his statesman, that would flatter him, and bid him go up and prosper. It is good to take advice, but then it must be of those that are fit to advise us. Those that will not take advice from the word of God, which would guide them aright, will justly be left to the ill advice of those that will counsel them to their destruction. Let those be made fools, that will not be made wise. (2.) Amaziah's imprudence is here made the punishment of his impiety, ver. 20. *It was of the Lord*, he left him to himself to act thus foolishly, that he and his people might be delivered into the hands of their enemies, because they had forsaken God, and sought after the gods of Edom. They that will not be persuaded to do well for their souls, will justly be given up to their own counsels to do ill for themselves even in their outward affairs.

2. Never was poor prince more violently pursued by his own subjects; from the time that he departed from the Lord (so it may be read, ver. 27.) the hearts of his subjects departed from him, and they began to form a design against him in Jerusalem: It is likely they were exasperated against him more for his rash engaging in a war against Israel, than for his worshipping the gods of Edom: But at length the ferment grew so high, and he perceived the plot laid so deep, that he thought fit to quit his royal city, and flee to Lachish, either as a private place where he might be hid, or as a strong place where he might be guarded; but they sent after him thither, and slew him there. By this, it seems to have been done deliberately, and to have been the act, not of a disgusted servant or two, but of a considerable body that durst avow it. How unrighteous soever they were herein, God was righteous.

### CHAP. XXVI.

This chapter gives us an account of the reign of Uzziah (Azariah he was called in the Kings) more fully than we had it before; tho' it was long, and in some respects illustrious, yet it was very briefly related, 2 Kings xiv. 21.—xv. 1, &c. Here is (1.) His good character in general, ver. 1—5. (2.) His great prosperity in his wars, his buildings, and all the affairs of his kingdom, ver. 6—15. (3.) His presumption in invading the priests office, for which he was struck with a leprosy, and confined by it, ver. 16—21. even to his death, ver. 22, 23.

1. **T**HEN all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah. 2. He built Eloth, and

restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers. 3. Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem: his mothers name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 4. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. 5. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper. 6. And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. 7. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Meunims. 8. And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah, and his name spread abroad, even to the entering in of Egypt, for he strengthened himself exceedingly. 9. Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner-gate, and at the valley-gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. 10. Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells, for he had much cattle, both in the low-country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vinedressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry. 11. Moreover, Uzziah had an host of fighting men that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account, by the hand of Jeiel the scribe, and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hanaiah, one of the kings captains. 12. The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour, were two thousand and six hundred. 13. And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. 14. And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones. 15. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers, and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal: and his name spread far abroad, for he was marvellously helped till he was strong.

We have here an account of two things concerning Uzziah:

1. His piety. In this he was not very eminent or zealous; yet he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; he kept up the pure worship of the true God, as his father did, and herein better than his father; that we have no reason to think he ever worshipped idols as his father did, no not in his latter days, when his heart was lifted up. It is said, ver. 5. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who, some think, was the son of that Zechariah, whom his grandfather Joash slew. He was one that had understanding in the visions of God; either the visions which he himself was favoured with, or the visions of the preceding prophets: He was well versed in prophecy, and conversed much with the upper world; was an intelligent, devout, good man; and, it seems, had a great influence upon Uzziah: Happy are the great men, who have such about them, and are willing to be advised by them; but unhappy those, who seek God only while they have such with them, and have not a principle in themselves to bear them out to the end.

2. His prosperity. In general, as long as he sought the Lord, and minded religion, God made him to prosper. Note, 1. Those only prosper, whom God makes to prosper; for prosperity is his gift. 2. Religion and piety is a good friend to outward prosperity. Many have found and owned this, that as long as they sought the Lord, and kept close to their duty, they prospered; but since they forsook God, every thing has gone cross.

Here are divers particular instances of his prosperity.

(1.) His success in his wars, God helped him, (ver. 7.) and then he triumphed over the Philistines, those old enemies of God's people, demolished the fortifications of their cities, and put garrisons of his own among them, ver. 6. He obliged the Ammonites to pay him tribute, ver. 8. He made all quiet about him, and kept them in awe.

(2.) The greatness of his fame and reputation. His name was celebrated throughout all the neighbouring countries, ver. 8. and it was a good name, a name for good things with God, and good people. This is true fame, and makes a man truly honourable.

3. His buildings: While he acted offensively abroad, he did not neglect the defence of his kingdom at home, but built towers in Jerusalem, and fortified them, ver. 4. The wall of Jerusalem was in his father's time much of it broken down, particularly at the corner gate, chap. xxv. 23. probably his father had repaired



it, but he to prevent the like mischief for the future fortified it, and *built a tower at the corner gate*. But his best fortifications of Jerusalem were his close adherence to the worship of God, which if his father had not forsaken, the wall of Jerusalem had not been broken down. While he fortified the city, he did not forget the country; but *built towers in the desert too, ver. 10.* to protect the country people from the inroads of the rapparees, bands of which sometimes alarmed them, and plundered them, as *chap. xxi. 16.*

4. His husbandry. He dealt much in cattle and corn, employed many hands, and got much wealth by it, for he took a pleasure in it, he *loved husbandry, ver. 10.* and, it is probable, did himself inspect his affairs in the country, which was no disparagement to him, but an advantage as it encouraged industry among his subjects. It is an honour to the husbandman's calling, that one of the most illustrious princes of the house of David followed it, and loved it. He was none of those that delight in war, nor addicted himself to sport and pleasure, but delighted in the innocent and quiet employments of the husbandman.

5. His standing armies. He had, as it should seem, two military establishments. (1.) An *host of fighting men* that were to make excursions abroad, they *went out to war by bands, ver. 11.* Partymen, that fetched in spoil from the neighbouring countries by way of reprisal for the depredations they had many a time made upon Judah. (2.) Another army for *guards and garrisons*, that were ready to defend the country, in case it should be invaded, *ver. 12, 13.* so great was their number and valour, that they *made war with mighty power*; no enemy durst face them, or at least could stand before them. Men unarmed can do little in war; Uzziah therefore furnished himself with a great armory, whence his soldiers were supplied with arms, offensive and defensive, *ver. 14.* spears, bows and slings, shields, helmets and habergeons; swords are not mentioned, because it is probable every man had a sword of his own, which he wore constantly. Engines were invented in his time, for the annoying besiegers, with darts and stones shot from the towers and bulwarks, *ver. 15.* What pity it is that the wars and fightings which come from mens lusts, have made it necessary for cunning men to employ their skill in inventing instruments of death!

16. ¶ But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his destruction*: for he transgressed against the LORD, his God, and went into the temple of the LORD, to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 17. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, *that were valiant men*: 18. And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron that are consecrated to burn incense*: go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed, neither *shall it be* for thine honour from the LORD God. 19. Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censor in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense-altar. 20. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and behold he *was* leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence, yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. 21. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house *being* a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son *was* over the kings house, judging the people of the land. 22. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz write. 23. So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which *belonged* to the kings; for they said, *He is a leper*: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

Here is the only blot we find on the name of king Uzziah, and it is such a one as lies not on any other of the kings. Whoredom, murder, oppression, persecution, and especially idolatry, gave characters to the bad kings, and some of them blemishes to the good ones, David himself not excepted, witness the matter of Uriah. But we find not Uzziah charged with any of these; and yet he *transgressed against the Lord his God*, and fell under the marks of his displeasure for it; not as other kings in vexatious wars or rebellions, but an incurable disease.

1. His sin was invading the priests office. The good way is one, by-paths are many: the transgression of his predecessors was, forsaking the temple of the Lord, and flying off from it, *chap. xxiv. 18.* and burning incense upon idolatrous altars, *chap. xxv. 14.* His was intruding into the temple of the Lord, further than

was allowed him, and attempting himself to *burn incense upon the altar of God*, for which, it is likely, he pretended an extraordinary zeal and affection. See how hard it is to avoid one extremity, and not run into another.

(1.) That which was at the bottom of his sin, was pride of heart; a lust that ruins more than any other whatsoever. *When he was strong, ver. 16.* (and marvellously helped by the good providence of God, *till he was so, ver. 15.*) when he was grown very great and considerable in wealth, interest, and power, instead of lifting up the name of God in gratitude to him, who had done so much for him, his *heart was lifted up to his destruction*. Thus the prosperity of fools, by puffing them up with pride, destroys them. Now he had done so much business, and won so much honour, he began to think no business, no honour too great or too good for him; no, not that of the priesthood. Mens pretending to forbidden knowledge, and exercising themselves in things too high for them, is owing to the pride of their heart, and the fleshly mind they are *vainly puffed up with*.

(2.) His sin was, *going into the temple of the Lord to burn incense*; probably on some solemn feast day, or when he himself had some special occasion of supplicating the divine favour. What should move him to this piece of presumption, or put it into his head, I cannot conjecture: none of all his predecessors, not the best, not the worst, attempted it: the law he knew was express against him, and there was no usage or precedent for him: he could not pretend any necessity, as there was for David's eating the shewbread. (1.) Perhaps he fancied the priests did not do their office so dextrously, decently, and devoutly, as they ought, and he could do it better. Or, (2.) He observed that the idolatrous kings did themselves burn incense at the altars of their gods; his father did so, and Jeroboam, *1 Kings xiii. 1.* an ambition of which honour, was perhaps one thing that tempted them from the house of God, where it was not permitted them; and he being resolved to cleave to God's altar, would try to break through this restraint, and come as near it as the idolatrous kings did to their altars. But it is called *a transgression against the Lord his God*. He was not content with the honours God had put upon him, but would usurp those that were forbidden him, like our first parents.

(3.) He was opposed in this attempt by the chief priest, and other priests that attended and assisted him, *ver. 17, 18.* They were ready to burn incense for the king, according to the duty of their place; but if he offer to do it himself, they plainly let him know, he meddles with that which doth not belong to him, and it is at his peril. They did not resist him by laying violent hands on him, tho' they were valiant men, but by reasoning with him, and shewing him (1.) That it was not lawful for him to burn incense: *It appertaineth not to thee, O Uzziah, but to the priests*, whose birth-right it is, as sons of Aaron, and who are consecrated to the service. Aaron and his sons were appointed by the law to burn incense, *Exod. xxx. 7.* See *Deut. xxxiii. 10.* *1 Chron. xxiii. 13.* David had blessed the people, Solomon and Jehoshaphat had prayed with them, and preached to them; Uzziah might have done this, and it would have been to his praise; but for burning incense, that service was to be performed by the priests only. The kingly, and priestly office were separated by the law of Moses, not to be united again but in the person of the Messiah. If Uzziah did intend to honour God, and gain acceptance with him in what he did, he was quite out in his aim; for being a service purely of divine institution, he could not expect it should be accepted, unless it were done in the way, and by the hands that God had appointed. (2.) That it was not safe. It shall not be *for thine honour from the Lord God*; more is implied, it will be thy disgrace, and it is at thy peril. The law runs express against all strangers that came nigh, *Numb. iii. 10.—xviii. 7. i. e.* all that were not priests. Korah and his accomplices, tho' Levites, paid dear for offering to burn incense, which was the work of the priests only, *Numb. xvi. 35.* The incense of our prayers must be by faith put into the hands of our Lord Jesus, the great high-priest of our profession, else we cannot expect it should be accepted with God. *Rev. viii. 3.*

(4.) He fell into a passion with the priests that reproved him, and would push forward to do what he intended notwithstanding, *ver. 19.* *Uzziah was wroth*, and would not part with the censor out of his hand: he took it ill to be checked, and would not bear it. *Nititur in vetitum.*

2. His punishment was an incurable leprosy, which rose up in his forehead while he was contending with the priests. If he had submitted to the priests admonition, acknowledged his error and gone back, all had been well; but *when he was wroth with the priests*, and fell foul upon them, then God was wroth with him, and smote him with a plague of leprosy. Josephus saith, he threatened the priests with death if they opposed him, and that then the earth shook; the roof of the temple opened, and through the cleft a beam of the sun darted directly upon the king's face, wherein immediately the leprosy appeared. And some conjecture, that that was the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, which we read of, *Amos i. 1.* and *Zech. xiv. 5.*

Now this sudden stroke,

1. Ended the controversy between him and the priests; for when the leprosy appeared, they were emboldened to thrust him out of the temple; nay, he himself *hastened to go out, because the Lord*



*Lord had smitten him* with a disease that was in a particular manner a token of his displeasure, and that he knew secluded him from common converse with men, much more from the altar of God. He would not be convinced by what the priests said, but God took an effectual course to convince him. If presumptuous men will not be made to see their error by the judgments of God's mouth, they shall be made to see it by the judgments of his hand. It evidenced some religious fear of God in the heart of this king, even in the midst of his transgression, that as soon as he found God was angry with him, he not only let fall his attempt, but retired with the utmost precipitation. Tho' he strove with the priests, he would not strive with his maker.

2. It remained a lasting punishment of his transgression; for he continued a leper to the day of his death, shut up in confinement, and shut out from society, and forced to leave it to his son to manage all his business, *ver. 21.* Thus God gave an instance of his resisting the proud, and of his jealousy for the purity and honour of his own institutions: thus he gave fair warning even to great and good men to know, and keep their distance, and not to intrude into those things which they have not seen. Thus he gave Uzziah a loud and constant call to repentance, and a long space to repent, which we have reason to hope he made a good improvement of. He had been a man of much business in the world, but being taken off from that, and confined to a *several house*, he had leisure to think of another world, and prepare for it. By this judgment upon the king, God intended to possess the people with a great veneration for the temple, the priesthood, and other sacred things, which they had been apt to think meanly of. While the king was a leper, he was as good as dead, dead while he lived, and buried alive; and so the law was in effect answered, that the stranger which cometh nigh shall be put to death. The disgrace survived him; for when he was dead, they would not bury him in the *sepulchres of the kings*, because he was a leper, which stained all his other glory.

3. It was a punishment that answered the sin, as face doth to face in a glass. (1.) Pride was at the bottom of his transgression, and thus God humbled him, and put dishonour upon him. (2.) He invaded the office of the priests in contempt of them; and God struck him with a disease, which in a particular manner made him subject to the inspection and sentence of the priests; for to them pertained the *judgment of the leprosy*, Deut. xxiv. 8. (3.) He thrust himself into the temple of God, whither the priests only had admission, and for that was thrust out of the very courts of the temple, into which the meanest of his subjects that was ceremonially clean, had free access. (4.) He confronted the priests that faced him, and opposed his presumption, and for that, the leprosy *rose in his forehead*, which in Miriam's case is compared to her father's *spitting in her face*, Numb. xii. 14. (5.) He invaded the dignity of the priesthood which he had no right to, and is for that deprived even of his royal dignity, which he had a right to. They that covet forbidden honours, forfeit allowed ones. Adam, by catching at the tree of knowledge, which he might not eat of, debarred himself from the tree of life which he might have eaten of. Let all that read it say, the Lord is righteous.

## C H A P. XXVII.

*Here is a very short account of the reign of Jotham, a pious prosperous prince, whom one would wish to have known more of: but we may the better dispense with the brevity of his story, because that which lengthened the history of the three last kings was their degeneracy in their latter end, which we have had a faithful account of; but there was no occasion for such a melancholy conclusion of the history of this reign, which is only an account* (1.) *Of the date and continuance of his reign,* *ver. 1, 8.* (2.) *The general good character of it,* *ver. 1, 6.* (3.) *The prosperity of it,* *ver. 3, 4, 5.* (4.) *The period of it,* *ver. 7, 9.*

1. **JOTHAM** was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: his mother's name also was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. 2. And he did *that which was right* in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly. 3. He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built much. 4. Moreover, he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers. 5. ¶ He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year and the third. 6. So Jotham

became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God. 7. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. 8. He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. 9. ¶ And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

There is not much more related here concerning Jotham, than we had before, 2 Kings, xv. 32, &c.

1. That he reigned well: he *did that which was right in the sight of the Lord*; the course of his reign was good and pleasing to God, whose favour he made his end, and his word his rule, and (which speaks him to act from a good principle) he *prepared his ways before the Lord his God*, *ver. 6. i. e.* He walked circumspectly, and with much caution, contrived how to shun that which was evil, and compass that which was good: he looked before him, and cast his affairs into such a posture, and such a method as made the regular management of them the more easy. Or, he established, or fixed, his ways before the Lord, *i. e.* he walked steadily and constantly in the way of his duty, was uniform and resolute in it; not like some of those that went before him, who tho' they had some good in them, lost their credit by their inconsistency and inconsistency with themselves. They had run well, but something hindered them. It was not so with Jotham.

Two things are observed here in his character:

(1.) That what was amiss in his father, he amended in himself, *ver. 2.* He did *according to all that his father did well and wisely*; howbeit, he would not imitate him in what he did amiss; for he *entered not into the temple of the Lord* to burn incense as his father did; but took warning by his fate, not to dare so presumptuous a thing. Note, We must not imitate the best men; and those we have the greatest veneration for, any further than they did well; but, on the contrary, their falls and harms by them must be warnings to us to walk the more circumspectly; that we stumble not at the same stone that they stumbled at.

(2.) That what was amiss in his people he could not prevail to amend. *The people did yet corruptly.* Perhaps it reflects some blame upon him, that he was wanting in his part towards the reformation of the land. Men may be very good themselves, and yet not have courage and zeal to do what they might do toward the reforming of others. However, it is certain, it reflects a great deal of blame upon the people, that they did not do what they might have done to improve the advantages of so good a reign: they had good instructions given them, and a good example set before them, but they would not be reformed; so that even in the reign of their good kings, as well as the bad ones, they were *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath*; for they still did corruptly and the founder melted in vain.

2. That he prospered, and made a very good figure.

(1.) He built. And in building, he began with *the gate of the house of the Lord*, repaired, beautified, and raised that; and then *fortified the wall of Ophel, and built cities in the mountains of Judah*, *ver. 3, 4.* took all possible care for the fortifying of his country, and the replenishing of it.

(2.) He conquered. Prevailed against the Ammonites, who had invaded Judah in Jehoshaphat's time, *chap. xx. 1.* He triumphed over them, and exacted great contributions from them, *ver. 5.*

(3.) He became mighty, *ver. 6.* in wealth and power, and influence upon the neighbour nations, who courted his friendships, and feared his displeasure; and this he got by *preparing his ways before the Lord his God.* The more steadfast we are in religion, the more mighty we are both for the resistance of that which is evil, and for the performance of that which is good.

3. That he finished his course too soon, but finished it with honour; had the unhappiness to die in the midst of his days; but to balance that, the happiness not to out-live his reputation; as his three next predecessors did. He died when he was but forty-one years of age, *ver. 8.* but *his wars and his ways*, his wars abroad, and his ways at home, were so glorious, that they were recorded in the book of the kings of Israel, as well as of the kings of Judah, *ver. 7.* The last words of the chapter carry on the heaviest accent of any in the chapter, that *Ahaz his son reigned in his stead*, whose character in all respects was the reverse of his. When that wealth and power which wise men have done good with, devolves upon fools that will do hurt with it, it is a lamentation; and shall be for a lamentation.



## C H A P. XXVIII.

*This chapter is the history of the reign of Ahaz, the son of Jotham; an ill reign it was, and which helped to augment the fierce anger of the Lord. We have here (1.) His great wickedness, ver. 1—4. (2.) The trouble he brought himself into by it, ver. 5—8. (3.) The reproof which God sent by a prophet to the army of Israel for trampling upon their brethren of Judah, and the obedient ear they gave to that reproof, ver. 9—15. (4.) The many calamities that followed after to Ahaz, and his people, ver. 16—21. (5.) The continuance of his idolatry notwithstanding, ver. 22, 25. and so his story ends, ver. 26, 27.*

1. **A**HAZ was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father. 2. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. 3. Moreover, he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. 4. He sacrificed also, and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. 5. Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus: and he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

Sure never man had greater opportunity of doing well than Ahaz had, finding things in a good posture, the kingdom rich and strong, and religion established, and yet here we have him in these few verses,

1. Wretchedly corrupted and debauched. He had had a good education given him, and a good example set him; but parents cannot give grace to their children, all the instructions he had were lost upon him, *he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord*, ver. 1. nay he did a great deal that was wrong, a wrong to God, to his own soul, and to his people; he walked in the way of the revolted Israelites, and the devoted Canaanites, made molten images and worshipped them, contrary to the second commandment; nay he made them for Baalim, contrary to the first commandment. He forsook the temple of the Lord, and sacrificed and burnt incense on the hills as if those would help him nearer heaven; and under every green tree, as if those would signify the protection and influence of heaven by their shade and dropping. And to compleat his wickedness, as one perfectly divested of all natural affection as well as religion, and perfectly devoted to the service and interest of the great enemy of mankind, he burnt his children in the fire to Moloch, ver. 3. not thinking it enough to dedicate them to that infernal fiend by causing them to pass through the fire. See what an absolute sway the prince of the power of the air bears among the children of disobedience.

2. Wretchedly spoiled and made a prey of. When he forsook God, and at a vast expence put himself under the protection of false gods, God, that of right was his God, delivered him into the hands of his enemies, ver. 5. (1.) The Syrians insulted him, and triumphed over him, beat him in the field, and carried away a great many of his people into captivity. (2.) The king of Israel tho' an idolater too, was made a scourge to him, and smote him with a great slaughter. The people suffered by these judgments, their blood was shed, their country wasted, their families ruined; for when they had a good king, tho' they did corruptly, chap. xxvii. 2. yet then his goodness sheltered them; but now they had a bad one, all their defence was departed from them, and an inundation of judgments broke in upon them. They that knew not their happiness in the foregoing reign, were taught to value it by the miseries of this.

6. ¶ For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, *which were* all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. 7. And Zichri a mighty man of Ephraim slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king. 8. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren, two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. 9. But a prophet of the LORD was there whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold,

because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage *that reacheth up unto* heaven. 10. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bond-men, and bondwomen unto you: *but are there* not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God? 11. Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you. 12. Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war; 13. And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD *already*, ye intend to add *more* to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and *there is* fierce wrath against Israel. 14. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil, before the princes and all the congregation. 15. And the men which were expressed by name, rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm-trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

We have here,

1. Treacherous Judah under the rebukes of God's providence, and they are very severe. Never was such bloody work made among them since they were a kingdom, and by Israelites too. Ahaz walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and the king of Israel was the instrument God made use of for his punishment. Those whom we make our patterns, or make ourselves partners with in sin, it is just with God to make them a plague to us. A war broke out between Judah and Israel, in which Judah went by the worst. For, (1.) There was a great slaughter in the field of battle: vast numbers; one hundred and twenty thousand men, and valiant men too at other times, were slain, ver. 6. and some of the first rank; the king's son for one. He had sacrificed some of his sons to Moloch, justly therefore is this sacrificed to the divine vengeance. Here is another that was next the king, his friend, the prime minister of state, or perhaps next him in the battle, so that the king himself had a fair escape, ver. 7. The kingdom of Israel was not strong at this time, and yet strong enough to bring this great destruction upon Judah. But certainly so many men, great men, stout men, could not have been cut off in one day, if they had not been strangely dispirited, both by the consciousness of their own guilt, and by the righteous hand of God upon them. Even valiant men were numbred *as sheep for the slaughter*, and became an easy prey to the enemy, *because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers*, and he had therefore forsaken them. (2.) There was a great captivity of women and children, ver. 8. when the army in the field was routed, the cities and towns, and country villages were all easily stripped, the inhabitants taken for slaves, and the wealth for a prey.

2. Even victorious Israel, under the rebukes of God's word, for the ill principle they had gone upon in making war with Judah, and the ill use they made of their success, and the good effect of this rebuke. Here is,

1. The message which God sent them by a prophet, who went out to meet them, not to applaud their valour, or congratulate their victory, tho' they returned laden with spoils and triumphs, but in God's name to tell them of their faults, and warn them of the judgments of God.

(1.) He tells them how they came by this victory they were so proud of; it was not because God favoured them, or that they had merited it at his hand, but *because he was wroth with Judah*, and made them the rod of his indignation. *Not for your righteousness, be it known to you, but for their wickedness*, Deut. ix. 5. *they are broken off*, therefore *be not you high minded but fear, lest God also spare not you*, Rom. xi. 20, 21.

(2.) He chargeth them with the abuse of the power God had given them over their brethren: They understand not what victory is, who think it gives them authority to do what they will, and that the longest sword is the clearest right to lives and estates (*Jusque datum sceleri*); no, as it is impolitic not to use a victory, so it is impious to abuse it. The conquerors are here reprov'd, (1.) For the cruelty of the slaughter they had made in the field. They had indeed *shed the blood of war in war*, we suppose that lawful, but it turned into sin to them, because they did it from an ill principle of enmity to their brethren, and after an ill manner, with a barbarous fury, *a rage reaching up to heaven*, i. e. that cries to God for vengeance against such bloody men, that delighted in military execution. They that serve God's justice, if they do



it with rage, and a spirit of revenge make themselves obnoxious to it, and forfeit the honour of acting for him. *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* (2.) For the imperious treatment they gave their prisoners. *Ye now purpose to keep them under,* to use them, or sell them, as slaves, tho' they are your brethren, and free-born Israelites. God takes notice of what men purpose, as well as of what they say and do.

(3.) He minds them of their own sins, by which they also were obnoxious to the wrath of God. *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?* He appeals to their own consciences, and to the notorious evidence of the thing. Tho' you are now made the instruments of correcting Judah for sin, yet do not think that you are therefore innocent yourselves; no, you also are guilty before God. This is intended as a check, (1.) To their triumph in their success; you are sinners, and it ill becomes sinners to be proud; you have carried the day now, but be not secure, the wheel may ere long return upon yourselves, for if judgment begin thus with those that have *the house of God* among them, what shall be the end of such as worship the calves? (2.) To their severity towards their brethren; you have now got them under, but you ought to shew mercy to them, for you yourselves are undone if you do not find mercy with God. It ill becomes sinners to be cruel. You have transgressions enow to answer for already, and need not add this to the rest.

(4.) He commands them to release the prisoners, and to send them home again carefully, *ver. 11.* for you having sinned, *the fierce wrath of God is upon you,* and there is no other way of escaping it, but by shewing mercy.

2. The resolution of the princes thereupon, not to detain the prisoners: *They stood up against them that came from the war,* tho' flushed with victory, and told them plainly, they should not bring their captives into Samaria, *ver. 12, 13.* They had sin enough already to answer for, and would have nothing done to add to their trespass. In this they discovered an obedient regard to the word of God by his prophet, and a tender compassion toward their brethren, which was wrought in them by the tender mercy of God; for he regarded the affliction of this poor people, and heard their cry, and *made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captive,* *Psal. cvi. 44, 46.*

3. The compliance of the soldiers with the resolution of the princes in this matter, and the dismissal of the captives thereupon. (1.) The armed men, tho' being armed, they might by force have maintained their title to what they got by the sword, acquiesced, and left their captives, and the spoil to the disposal of the princes, *ver. 14.* and herein they shewed a more true heroick bravery, than they did in taking them. It is a great honour for any man to yield to the authority of reason and religion, against his interest. (2.) The princes very generously sent home the poor captives well accommodated, *ver. 15.* Those that hope to find mercy with God, must learn from hence, with what tenderness to carry themselves towards those that lie at their mercy. It is strange, that these princes, who in this instance discovered such a deference to the word of God, and such an influence upon the people, had not so much grace, as in obedience to the calls of God by so many prophets, to root idolatry out of their kingdom, which soon after this, was the ruin of it.

16. ¶ At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. 17. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. 18. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low-country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederath, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. 19. For the LORD brought Judah low, because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD. 20. And Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. 21. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD: and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. 22. ¶ And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz. 23. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me: but they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. 24. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. 25. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto

other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers. 26. ¶ Now the rest of his acts, and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 27. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, *even* in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is, 1. The great distress which the kingdom of Ahaz was reduced to for his sin. In general, (1.) *The Lord brought Judah low,* *ver. 19.* They had lately been very high in wealth and power; but God found means to take them down, and make them as despicable, as they had been formidable. They that will not humble themselves under the word of God, will justly be humbled by his judgments. *Iniquity brings men low,* *Psal. cvi. 43.* (2.) Ahaz made Judah naked. As his sin debased them, so it exposed them. It made them *naked to their shame*; for it exposed them to contempt, as a man unclothed; It made them naked to their danger; for it exposed them to assaults, as a man unarmed, *Exod. xxxii. 25.* sin strips men. In particular, the Edomites to be revenged for Amaziah's cruel usage of them, *chap. xxv. 12.* smote Judah, and carried off many captives, *ver. 17.* The Philistines also insulted them, took and kept possession of several cities and villages that lay towards them, *ver. 18.* and so they were revenged for the incursions which Uzziah had made upon them, *chap. xxvi. 6.* And to shew that it was purely the sin of Ahaz that brought the Philistines upon his country, in the very year that he died, the prophet Isaiah foretold the destruction of the Philistines by his son, *Isa. xiv. 28, 29.*

2. The addition which Ahaz made, both to the national distress, and the national guilt.

1. He added to the distress, by making court to strange kings, in hopes they would relieve him. When the Edomites and Philistines were vexatious to him, he *sent to the kings of Assyria to help him,* *ver. 16.* for he found his own kingdom weakned, and made naked, and he could not put any confidence in God, and therefore was at a vast expence to get an interest in the king of Assyria. He pillaged the house of God, and the king's house, and squeezed the princes for money to hire these foreign forces into his service, *ver. 21.* Tho' he had conformed to the idolatry of the heathen nations, his neighbours, they did not value him for that, nor love him the better, nor did his compliance, by which he lost God, gain them, nor could he make any interest in them, but with his money. It is oft found that wicked men themselves have no real affection for those that revolt to them, nor care to do them a kindness. A degenerate branch, is looked upon on all sides as an *abominable branch,* *Isa. xiv. 19.* But what did Ahaz get by the king of Assyria? Why he *came to him,* but he *distressed him,* and *strengthened him not,* *ver. 20. helped him not,* *ver. 21.* The forces of the Assyrian quartered upon his country, and so impoverished and weakned it; grew insolent and imperious, and created him a great deal of vexation, like a broken reed, which not only fails, but pierces the hand.

2. He added to the guilt, by making court to strange gods, in hopes they would relieve him. In his distress, instead of repenting of his idolatry, which he had reason enough to see the folly of, he *trespassed yet more,* *ver. 22.* was more mad than ever upon his idols; a brand of infamy is here set upon him for it. This is that king Ahaz, that wretched man, that was the scandal of the house of David, and the curse and plague of his generation. Note, Those are wicked and vile indeed, that are made worse by their afflictions, instead of being made better by them; who in their *distress, trespass yet more,* have their corruption exasperated by that which should mollify them, and their hearts more *fully set in them to do evil.* Let us see what his trespass was. (1.) He abused the house of God; for he *cut in pieces the vessels* of it, that the priests might not perform the service of the temple, or not as it should be, for want of vessels; and at length, *shut up the doors,* that the people might not attend it, *ver. 24.* This was worse than the worst of the kings before him had done. (2.) He confronted the altar of God, for he *made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem*; so that, as the prophet speaks, they were like *heaps in the furrows of the field,* *Hos. xii. 11.* And in the cities of Judah, either by his power or by his purse, or both, he erected high places for the people to burn incense to what idol they pleased, as it were with design to *provoke the God of his fathers,* *ver. 25.* (3.) He cast off God himself; for he *sacrificed to the gods of Damascus,* *ver. 23.* not because he loved them, for he thought they smote him; but because he feared them, thinking they helped his enemies, and if he could bring them into his interest, they would help him. Foolish man! It was his own God that smote him, and strengthened the Syrians against him, not the gods of Damascus; had he sacrificed to him, and to him only, he would have helped him. But no marvel mens affections and devotions are misplaced, when they mistake the author of their trouble and help. And what comes of it? The gods of Syria befriended Ahaz no more than the kings of Assyria did; they were *the ruin of him, and of all Israel.* This sin provoked God to bring judgments upon them, to cut him off in the midst of his days, when he was but



thirty-six years old ; and it debauched the people so, that the reformation of the next reign could not prevail to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, but they retained that root of bitterness till the captivity in Babylon plucked it up.

The chapter concludes with the conclusion of the reign of Ahaz, *ver.* 26, 27. For ought appears, he died impenitent, and therefore died inglorious ; for he was not buried *in the sepulchres of the kings*. Justly was he thought unworthy to be laid among them, that was so unlike them ; to be buried with kings, who had used his kingly power for the destruction of the church, and not for its protection or edification.

C H A P. XXIX.

*We are here entering upon a pleasant scene, the good and glorious reign of Hezekiah ; in which we shall find more of God and religion ; than perhaps in any of the good reigns we have yet met with ; for he was a very zealous, devout, good man, none like him. In this chapter we have an account of the work of reformation which he set about with vigour, immediately after his accession to the crown. Here is (1.) His exhortation to the priests and Levites, when he put them in possession of the house of God again, *ver.* 1—11. (2.) The care and pains which the Levites took to cleanse the temple, and put things into order there, *ver.* 12—19. (3.) A solemn revival of God's ordinances that had been neglected, in which atonement was made for the sins of the last reign, and the wheels set a-going again, to the great satisfaction of king and people, *ver.* 20—36.*

1. **H**EZEKIAH began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem : and his mothers name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. 3. ¶ He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them. 4. And he brought in the priests, and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east-street. 5. And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctifie now yourselves, and sanctifie the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. 6. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs. 7. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burnt incense, nor offered burnt-offerings in the holy place, unto the God of Israel. 8. Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. 9. For lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters, and our wives are in captivity for this. 10. Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. 11. My sons, be not now negligent : for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that you should minister unto him, and burn incense.

Here is, 1. Hezekiah's age when he came to the crown, he was *twenty-five years old*. Joash that came to the crown after two bad reigns, was but seven years old ; Josiah that came after two bad reigns, was but eight ; which occasioned the delay of the reformation : But Hezekiah was come to years, and so applied himself presently to it. We may well think, with what a sorrowful heart he beheld his father's idolatry and profaneness, how it troubled him to see the doors of the temple shut up, and whilst his father lived, he durst not open them : His soul, no doubt, wept in secret for it, and he vowed, that when he should receive the congregation, he would redress these grievances, which made him do it with more readiness and resolution.

2. His general character. He *did that which was right, like David*, *ver.* 2. Of several of his predecessors it had been said they did that which was right, *but not like David*, not with David's integrity and zeal. But here was one that had as hearty an affection for the ark and law of God as ever David had.

3. His speedy application to the great work of restoring religion. The first thing he did, was to *open the doors of the house of the Lord*, *ver.* 3. We are willing to hope his father had not quite suppressed the temple-service ; for then the holy-fire on the altar must have gone out, which we do not read of the re-kindling of ; but he had hindered the people from attending it, and the priests,

but such of them as were of his own party, *2 Kings xvi. 15*. But Hezekiah immediately threw the church-doors open, and *brought in the priests and Levites*. He found Judah low and naked, yet did not make it his first business to revive the civil interests of his kingdom, but to restore religion to its good posture again. Those that begin with God, begin at the right end of their work, and it will prosper accordingly.

4. His speech to the priests and Levites : It was well known, no doubt, that he had a real kindness for religion, and was disaffected to the corruptions of the last reign ; yet we do not find the priests and Levites addressing themselves to him for the restoration of the temple-service, but he calls upon them ; which, I doubt, speaks their coldness, as much as his zeal ; and perhaps, if they had done their part with vigour, things had not been brought into so very bad a posture as Hezekiah found them in.

Hezekiah's exhortation to the Levites is very pathetic.

1. He lays before them the desolations of religion, and the deplorable state to which it was brought among them, *ver.* 6, 7. *Our fathers have trespassed*. He saith not, my father, because it became him, as a son, to be as tender as might be of his father's name, and because his father would not have done all this, if their fathers had not neglected their duty. Urijah the priest had joined with Ahaz in setting up an idolatrous altar. He complains, (1.) That the house of God had been deserted ; *They have forsaken God, and turned their backs upon his habitation*. Note, Those that turn their backs upon God's ordinances, may truly be said to forsake God himself. (2.) That the instituted worship of God there had been let fall ; the lamps were not lighted, incense was not burnt ; the like neglects are now, and no less culpable, if the word be not duly read and opened, for that was signified by the *lighting of the lamps*, and if prayers and praises be not duly offered up, for that was signified by the *burning of incense*.

2. He shews them the sad consequences of the neglect and decay of religion among them, *ver.* 8, 9. This was the cause of all the calamities they had lain under ; God had in anger delivered them to trouble, to the sword, and to captivity. When we are under the rebukes of God's providence, it is good for us to enquire whether we have not neglected God's ordinances, and whether that be not the controversy he has with us.

3. He declares his own full purpose and resolution to revive religion, and make it his business to promote it, *ver.* 10. *It is in my heart*, i. e. I am fully resolved to *make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel*, i. e. to worship him only, and in that way which he hath appointed, for I am sure that otherwise his fierce anger will not turn away from us. This covenant he would not only make himself, but bring his people into the bond of.

4. He engageth and exciteth the Levites and priests to do their duty on this occasion. This he begins with, *ver.* 5. this he ends with, *ver.* 11. calls them Levites, to mind them of their obligation to God, calls them his sons, to mind them of their relation to him, that he expected that, *as a son with the father, they should serve with him* in the reformation of the land. (1.) He tells them what was their duty ; to sanctify themselves first, by repenting of their neglects, reforming their own hearts and lives, and renewing their covenants with God, to do their duty better for time to come ; and then to *sanctify the house of God*, as his servants to make it clean from every thing that was disagreeable, either through the difuse or the profanation of it, and to set it up for the purposes it was made for. (2.) He stirs them up to it, *ver.* 11. *Be not now negligent*, or remiss in your duty. Let not this good work be retarded thro' your carelessness. Be not deceived, so the margin. They that by their negligence in the service of God think to mock God, and put a cheat upon him, do but deceive themselves, and put a damning cheat upon their own souls. Be not secure, so some, as if there were no haste to do it, or no danger in not doing it. Mens negligence in religion is owing to their carnal security. The consideration he quickens them with, is their office : The honour God had put upon them ; he has *chosen you to stand before him* : The work he expected from them ; they were not chosen to be idle, to enjoy the dignity, and leave the duty to be done by others, but to serve him, and to minister to him. They must therefore be ashamed of their late remissness, and now the doors of the temple were opened, again set about their work there with double diligence.

12. ¶ Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites : and of the sons of Merari ; Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel : and of the Gershonites ; Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah : 13. And of the sons of Elizaphan ; Shimri, and Jeiel : and of the sons of Asaph ; Zechariah, and Mattaniah : 14. And of the sons of Heman ; Jehiel, and Shimei : and of the sons of Jeduthun ; Shemaiah, and Uzziel. 15. And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. 16. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD,



L O R D, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the L O R D, into the court of the house of the L O R D. And the Levites took it to carry it out abroad unto the brook Kidron. 17. Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctifie, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the L O R D: so they sanctified the house of the L O R D in eight days, and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end. 18. Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the L O R D, and the altar of burnt-offering, with all the vessels thereof, the shew-bread table, with all the vessels thereof. 19. Moreover, all the vessels which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared, and sanctified, and behold, they are before the altar of the L O R D.

We have here busy work, and good work, needful work, the cleansing of the house of the Lord.

1. The persons employed in this work were the priests and Levites, who should have kept it clean, but not having done that, were concerned to make it clean. Several of the Levites are here named; two of each of the three principal houses, Kohath, Gershon, and Merari, *ver. 12.* And two of each of the three families of singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, *ver. 13.* We cannot think these are named merely because they were chief in place, for then sure the high priest, or some of the heads of the courses of the priests would have been mentioned; but because they were more zealous and active than the rest. When God has work to do, he will raise up leading men to preside in it. And it is not always that the first in place and rank are most fit for service, nor most forward to it. These Levites not only bestirred themselves, but gathered their brethren and quickened them to do according to the commandment of the king by the words of the Lord. Observe, they did according to the king's command, but with an eye to God's word; the king commanded them what was already their duty by the word of God, and in doing it they regarded God's word as a rule to them, and the king's commandment as a spur to them.

2. The work was *cleansing the house of God*, (1.) From the common dirt it had contracted while it was shut up, dust, and cobwebs, and the rust of the vessels; (2.) From the idols and idolatrous altars that were set up in it, which, tho' kept never so neat were a greater pollution to it, than if it had been made the common-sewer of the city. The priests were none of them mentioned as leading men in this work, yet none but they durst go into the inner part of the house, no not to cleanse it, which they did, and perhaps the high priest into the holy of holies to cleanse that. And tho' the Levites had the honour to be the leaders in the work, they did not disdain to be servitors to the priests according to their office; for what filth the priests brought into the court, the Levites carried to the brook Kidron. Let not mens usefulness be it never so eminent make them forget their place.

3. The expedition with which they did this work was very remarkable. They began on the first day of the first month, a happy beginning of the new-year, and that promised a good year; thus should every year begin with the reformation of what is amiss, and the purging away of all the defilements contracted the foregoing year by true repentance. In eight days they cleared the temple, and cleaned it, and in eight days more the courts of the temple, *ver. 17.* Let those that do good work learn to rid work, and get it done: Let what is amiss be amended quickly.

4. The report they made of it to Hezekiah was very agreeable, *ver. 18, 19.* They gave him an account what they had done, because it was he that set them on work, boasted not of their own care and pains, nor did they come to him to be paid, but to let him know that all the things that had been profaned were now sanctified according to law, and were ready to be used again whenever he pleased. They knew the good king had set his heart upon God's altar, and longed to be attending that, and therefore they insist most upon the readiness they had put that into; that the vessels of the altar were scoured and brightned, those which Ahaz in his transgression had cast away, as vessels in which there was no pleasure, those they gathered together, sanctified them, and laid them in their place before the altar. Tho' the vessels of the sanctuary may be profaned for a while, God will find a time and way to sanctify them. Neither his ordinances nor his people shall be suffered to fail for ever.

20. ¶ Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the L O R D. 21. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctu-

ary, and for Judah: and he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the L O R D. 22. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar. 23. And they brought forth the he-goats for the sin-offering, before the king and the congregation, and they laid their hands upon them: 24. And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt-offering, and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel. 25. And he set the Levites in the house of the L O R D with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the kings seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the L O R D by his prophets. 26. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets: 27. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar: and when the burnt-offering began, the song of the L O R D began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. 28. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. 29. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him, bowed themselves, and worshipped. 30. Moreover, Hezekiah the king, and the princes commanded the Levites, to sing praise unto the L O R D, with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer: and they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped. 31. Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated your selves unto the L O R D, come near and bring sacrifices, and thank-offerings into the house of the L O R D. And the congregation brought in sacrifices, and thank-offerings, and as many as were of a free heart, burnt-offerings. 32. And the number of the burnt-offerings which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt-offering to the L O R D. 33. And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep. 34. But the priests were too few, so that they could not slay all the burnt-offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctifie themselves than the priests. 35. And also the burnt-offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace-offerings, and the drink-offerings for every burnt-offering: So the service of the house of the L O R D was set in order. 36. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

The temple being cleansed, we have here an account of the good use that was immediately made of it. A solemn assembly was called to meet the king at the temple the very next day, *ver. 20.* and very glad, no doubt, all the good people in Jerusalem were, when it was said, let us go up to the house of the Lord, *Psal. cxxi. 1.* As soon as Hezekiah heard that the temple was ready for him, he lost no time, but made it appear he was ready for it. He rose early to go up to the house of the Lord, earlier on that day than on other days, to shew that his heart was upon his work there.

Now this day's work was to look two ways;

1. Atonement must be made for the sins of the last reign. They thought it not enough to lament and forsake those sins, but they brought a sin-offering. Even our repentance and reformation will not obtain pardon but in and through Christ, who was made sin, *i. e.* a sin-offering for us. No peace but through his blood, no not for penitents. Observe,

1. The sin-offering was for the kingdom, the sanctuary, and for Judah, *ver. 21. i. e.* to make atonement for the sins of princes, priests, and people, for they had all corrupted their way. The law of Moses appointed sacrifices to make atonement for the sins of the whole congregation, *Lev. iv. 13, 14. Numb. xv. 24, 25.* that the national judgments which their national sins deserved might be turned away: for this we must now have an eye to Christ the great propitiation, as well as for the remission and salvation of particular persons.



2. The law appointed only one goat for a sin-offering, as on the day of atonement, *Lev. xvi. 15.* and on such extraordinary occasions as this, *Numb. xv. 24.* But they here offered seven, *ver. 23.* because the sins of the congregation had been very great and long continued in. Seven is a number of perfection: our great sin-offering is but one, yet that one perfects for ever them that are sanctified.

3. The king and the congregation, (*i. e.* the representatives of the congregation) laid their hands on the head of the goats that were for the sin-offering, *ver. 23.* thereby owning themselves guilty before God, and expressing their desire that the guilt of the sinner might be transferred upon the sacrifice. By faith we lay our hands on the Lord Jesus, and so receive the atonement, *Rom. v. 11.*

4. Burnt-offerings were offered with the sin-offerings, *seven bullocks, seven rams, and seven lambs.* The intention of the burnt-offerings was to give glory to the God of Israel, whom they own as the only true God, which it was proper to do at the same time that they were by the sin-offering making atonement for their offences. The blood of those as well as of the sin-offering was sprinkled upon the altar, *ver. 22.* to make reconciliation for all Israel, *ver. 24.* and not for Judah only; Christ is a propitiation not for the sins of Israel only, but of the whole world, *1 John ii. 1, 2.*

5. While the offerings were burning upon the altar, the Levites sang the song of the Lord, *ver. 27.* the Psalms composed by David and Asaph, *ver. 30.* with the musical instruments which God by his prophets had commanded the use of, *ver. 25.* and which had been long neglected; even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. By faith we must rejoice in Christ Jesus as our righteousness; and our prayers and praises must ascend with his offering, to be accepted only in the virtue of it.

6. The king and all the congregation testified their consent to, and concurrence in, all that was done, by bowing their heads and worshipping; expressing an awful veneration of the divine majesty, by postures of adoration. This is taken notice of, *ver. 28, 29, 30.* It is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped if we do not ourselves worship him, and that not with bodily exercise only which profits little, but with the heart.

2. The solemnities of this day did likewise look forward: the temple service was to be set up again, that it might be continually kept up; and this Hezekiah calls them to, *ver. 31.* Now ye have consecrated yourselves to the Lord, have both made an atonement and made a covenant by sacrifice; are solemnly reconciled and engaged to him; now come near, and bring sacrifices. Note, Our covenant with God must be pursued and improved in communion with him. Having consecrated ourselves in the first place to the Lord, we must bring the sacrifices of prayer and praise, and alms, to his house. Now in this work it was found,

1. That the people were free: being called to it by the king, they brought in their offerings, tho' not in such abundance as in the glorious days of Solomon; for Judah was now diminished, impoverished, and brought low, but according to what they had, and as much as one could expect considering their poverty, and the great decay of piety among them. (1.) Some were so generous as to bring burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no part; of this sort there were seventy bullocks, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs, *ver. 32.* (2.) Others brought peace-offerings, and thank-offerings, the fat of which was burnt upon the altar, and the flesh divided between the priests and the offerers, *ver. 35.* of this sort there were six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep, *ver. 33.* Perhaps, the remembrance of their sin in sacrificing on the high places, made them more willing to bring their sacrifices now to God's altar.

2. That the priests were few, too few for the service, *ver. 34.* Many of them, it is likely, were suspended, and laid aside as polluted and uncanonical for having sacrificed to idols in the last reign, and the rest had not the zeal that one might have expected upon such an occasion; they thought the king needed not to be so forward, that there was no such haste of opening the doors of the temple, and therefore they took no care to sanctify themselves, and being un sanctified and so unqualified they made that their excuse for being absent from the service; as if their offence would be their defence. It is recorded here to the perpetual shame of the priests, that tho' they were so well provided for out of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, yet they did not mind their business; here was work to do, and there wanted proper hands to do it.

3. That the Levites were forward. They had been more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests, *ver. 34.* were better affected to the work, and better prepared and qualified for it; this was their praise, and in recompense for it they had the honour to be employed in that which was the priests work; they helped them to slay the offerings. This was not according to the law, *Lev. i. 5, 6.* But the irregularity was dispensed with in case of necessity, and that encouragement might be given to the faithful zealous Levites, and a just disgrace put upon the careless priests. What the Levites wanted in the ceremonial advantages of their birth and consecration, was abundantly made up in their eminent qualifications of skill and will to do the work.

4. That all were pleased; the king and all the people rejoiced in this blessed turn of affairs, and the new face of religion which the kingdom had put on, *ver. 36.* Two things in this matter pleased them. (1.) That it was soon brought about, *the thing was done suddenly,* in a little time, with a great deal of ease and without any opposition. Those that go about the work of God in faith and with resolution, will find there is not that difficulty in it which they sometimes imagine, but it will be a pleasing surprize to them to see how soon it is done. (2.) That it was plain the hand of God was in it; *God had prepared the people,* by the secret influences of his grace, so that many of those who had in the last reign doted on the idolatrous altars, were now as much in love with God's altar. This change God wrought on their minds did very much expedite and facilitate the work. Let magistrates and ministers do their part towards the reforming of a land, and then let them trust God to do his, and ascribe to him the glory of what is done, especially when it is done suddenly, and is a pleasing surprize. *This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous.*

## C H A P. XXX.

In this chapter we have an account of the solemn passover which Hezekiah kept in the first year of his reign. (1.) The consultation about it, and the resolution he and his people came to for the observance of it, *ver. 2—5.* (2.) The invitation he sent to Judah and Israel to come and keep it, *ver. 1, 6—12.* (3.) The joyful celebration of it, *ver. 13—27.* And by this the reformation set on foot in the foregoing chapter was greatly advanced and established, and that nail in God's holy place clenched.

1. **A**ND Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel. 2. For the king had taken counsel, and his princes and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. 3. For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. 4. And the thing pleased the king, and all the congregation. 5. So they established a decree, to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written. 6. So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. 8. Now be ye not stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield your selves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. 9. For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him. 10. So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. 11. Nevertheless, divers of Asher and Manasseh, and of Zebulun, humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. 12. Also in Judah, the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king, and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.

Here is, 1. A passover resolved upon. That annual feast was instituted as a memorial of the bringing of the children of Israel, out of Egypt: it happened that the reviving of the temple-service fell within the appointed days of that feast, the seventeenth day of the first month; this brought that forgotten solemnity to mind; What shall we do, saith Hezekiah, about the passover? It is a very comfortable ordinance, and has been long neglected, how shall



shall we revive that? The time is lapsed for this year; we cannot go about it immediately, the congregation is thin, the people have not notice, the priests are not prepared, *ver. 3.* Must we defer it till another year? Many, it is likely, were for deferring it: but Hezekiah considered that by that time twelve-month the good affections of the people would cool, and it would be too long to want the benefit of the ordinance; and therefore finding a proviso in the law of Moses, that particular persons who were unclean in the first month, might keep the passover the fourteenth day of the second month, and be accepted, *Numb. ix. 11.* he doubted not but that might be extended to the congregation. Whereupon they resolved to keep the passover in the second month. Let the circumstance give way to the substance, and let not the thing itself be lost upon a nicety about the time. It is good striking while the iron is hot, and taking people when they are in a good mind. Delays are dangerous.

2. A proclamation issued out to give notice of this passover, and to summon the people to it.

1. An invitation was sent to the ten revolted tribes to stir them up to come and attend this solemnity. Letters were written to Ephraim and Manasseh to invite them to Jerusalem to keep this passover, *ver. 1.* not with any politick design to bring them back to the house of David, but with a pious design to bring them back to the Lord God of Israel; let them take who they will for their king, saith Hezekiah, so they will but take him for their God. The matters in difference between Judah and Israel, either upon a civil or sacred account shall not hinder, but that if the people of Israel will sincerely return to the Lord their God, Hezekiah will bid them as welcome to the passover as any of his own subjects. Expresses are sent post throughout all the tribes of Israel, with memorials, earnestly pressing the people to take this opportunity of returning to the God from whom they had revolted. Now here we have,

(1.) The contents of the circular letters that were dispatched away upon this occasion, in which Hezekiah discovers a great concern both for the honour of God, and for the welfare of the neighbouring kingdom, the prosperity of which he seems passionately desirous of, tho' he not only received no toll, tribute, or custom from it, but it had oft, and not long since been vexatious to his kingdom. This is rendring good for evil. Observe, 1. What it is which he presseth them to, *ver. 8. Yield your selves unto the Lord.* Before you can come into communion with him, you must come into covenant with him. Give the hand to the Lord; so the word is, *i. e.* consent to take him for your God: a bargain is confirmed by giving the hand; strike this bargain. Join yourselves to him in an everlasting covenant. *Subscribe with the hand to be his, Isa. xlv. 5.* Give him your hand in token of giving him your heart; lay your hand to his plough; devote yourselves to his service to work for him. *Yield to him, i. e.* come up to his terms; come under his government; stand it not out any longer against him. *Yield to him, to be absolutely and universally at his command, at his dispose; to be, and do, and have, and suffer whatever he pleaseth.* In order to this, be not *stiff-necked as your fathers were*; let not your corrupt and wicked wills rise up in resistance of, and rebellion against, the will of God. Say not, you will do what you please, but what he pleaseth. There is in the carnal mind a stiffness and obstinacy, an unaptness to comply with God; we have it from our fathers, it is bred in the bone with us: this must be conquered; and the will that had in it a spirit of contradiction, must be melted into the will of God; and to his yoke the neck must be bowed and fitted that was an iron sinew. In pursuance to this resignation to God, he presseth them *to enter into the sanctuary, i. e.* to attend upon him in that place which he had chosen to put his name there, and serve him in the ordinances which he had appointed. The doors of the sanctuary are now opened, and you have liberty to enter; the temple service is now revived, and you are welcome to join in it; the king saith, come, the princes and priests say, *come, whoever will, let him come.* This he calls, *ver. 6. Turning to the Lord God*; for they had forsaken him, and worshipped other gods; *repent now, and be converted.* Thus they that through grace have turned to God themselves, should do all they can to bring others back to him. 2. What arguments he useth to persuade them to do this. (1.) You are children of Israel, and therefore stand related, stand obliged, to the God of Israel, from whom you are revolted. (2.) The God you are called to return to, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a God in covenant with your first fathers, who served him and yielded themselves to him; and it was their honour and happiness. (3.) Your late fathers that forsook him, and trespassed against him have been given up to desolation; their apostasy and idolatry has been their ruin, as you see, *ver. 7.* Let their harms be your warnings. (4.) You yourselves are but a remnant narrowly escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria, *ver. 6.* and therefore are concerned to put your selves under the protection of the God of your fathers, that you be not quite swallowed up. (5.) This is the only way of turning away the fierceness of God's anger from you, *ver. 8.* which will certainly consume you if you continue stiff-necked. (6.) If you return to God in a way of duty, he will return to you in a way of mercy. This he begins with, *ver. 6.* and concludes with, *ver. 9.* In general, you will find him *gracious and merciful*, and one that *will not turn*

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away his face from you, if you seek him, notwithstanding the provocations you have given him. Particularly, you may hope that he will turn again the captivity of your brethren that are carried away, and bring them back to their own land: now could any thing be expressed more pathetically, more movingly? could there be a better cause, and better pleaded?

(2.) The entertainment which Hezekiah's messengers and message met with. It does not appear that Hoshea, who was now king of Israel, took any umbrage from, or gave any opposition to the dispersing of these proclamations through his kingdom, nor that he forbade his subjects to accept the invitation; but left them entirely to their liberty, they might go to Jerusalem to worship if they pleased; for tho' he did evil, yet *not like the kings of Israel that were before him, 2 Kings xvii. 2.* He saw ruin coming upon his kingdom, and if any of his subjects would try this expedient to prevent it, with all his heart. But for the people,

1. The generality of them, slighted the call, and turned a deaf ear to it. The messengers went from city to city, some to one, and some to another, and used pressing instances with the people to come up to Jerusalem to keep the passover; but they were so far from complying with the message, that they abused them that brought it, *laughed them to scorn, and mocked them, ver. 10.* not only refused, but refused with disdain. Tell them of the God of Abraham, they knew him not, they had other gods to serve, Baal and Ashtaroth; tell them of the sanctuary, their high-places were as good; of God's mercy and wrath, they neither dreaded the one, nor desired the other. No marvel the king's messengers were thus despitefully used by this apostate race, when God's messengers were so, his servants the prophets, that produced credentials from him. The destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes was now at hand, it was but two or three years after this that the king of Assyria laid siege to Samaria, which ended in the captivity of those tribes: just before this, they had not only a king of their own that permitted them to return to God's sanctuary, but a king of Judah that earnestly invited them to do it: had they generally accepted this invitation, it might have prevented their ruin; but their contempt of it hastened and aggravated it, and left them inexcusable.

2. Yet there were some few that accepted the invitation: the message, tho' to some it was a *savour of death unto death*, was to others a *savour of life unto life, ver. 11.* In the worst of times God has had a remnant; so he had here, divers of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun, (here is no mention of any out of Ephraim) *humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem, i. e.* were sorry for their sins, and submitted to God. Pride keeps men from yielding themselves to the Lord, when that is brought down, the work is done.

3. A command was given to the men of Judah to attend this solemnity; and they universally obeyed it, *ver. 12.* They did it with one heart, were all of a mind in it, and *the hand of God gave them that one heart*; for it is in the day of power that Christ's subjects are made willing: It is God that works both *to will, and to do.* When people at any time discover an unexpected forwardness to that which is good, we must acknowledge the hand of God in it.

13. ¶ And there assembled at Jerusalem much people, to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation. 14. And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron. 15. Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt-offerings into the house of the LORD. 16. And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, which they received of the hand of the Levites. 17. For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers, for every one that was not clean, to sanctifie them unto the LORD. 18. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover, otherwise than it was written: but Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one. 19. That prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. 20. And the LORD hearkned to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

The time appointed for the passover is now come, and a very great congregation came together upon this occasion, *ver. 13.* Now here we have,

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1. The preparation they made for the passover; and good preparation it was: they took away all the idolatrous altars that were found not only in the temple, but in Jerusalem, *ver. 14.* Before they kept the feast, they cast out this old leaven. The best preparation we can make for the gospel-passover, is to cast away our iniquities, our spiritual idolatries.

2. Their celebration of the passover; in this the people were so forward and zealous, that the priests and Levites blushed to see themselves out-done by the commonalty, to see them more ready to bring sacrifices, than they were to offer them. This put them upon sanctifying themselves, *ver. 16.* that the work might not stand still for want of hands to carry it on. The notice we take of the zeal of others, should make us ashamed of our own coldness, and quicken us not only to do our duty, but to do it well, and to sanctify ourselves to it. They did according to the duty of their place, *ver. 16.* sprinkling the blood upon the altar, which was a type of Christ our passover sacrificed for us.

3. The irregularities they were guilty of in this solemnity. The substance was well managed, and with a great deal of devotion; but besides that it was a month out of time. (1.) The Levites killed the passover, which should have been done by the priests only, *ver. 17.* They also assisted more than ordinarily the law allowed, in offering the other sacrifices, particularly those that were for the purifying of the unclean, many of which there was now occasion for. Some think, it was the offerers work not the priests, that the Levites had here the charge of. Ordinarily every man killed his lamb, but now for those that were under any ceremonial pollution the Levites did it. (2.) Many were permitted to eat the passover that were not purified according to the strictness of the law, *ver. 18.* This was the second month, and they had no warrant to put them off further to the third month, as if it had been the first month the law had permitted them to eat it the second. And they were loth to forbid them communicating at all, lest they should discourage new converts, and send them away complaining, whom they desired to send away rejoicing. Grotius observes from this, that ritual institutions must give way not only to a publick necessity, but to a publick benefit and advantage.

4. Hezekiah's prayer to God for the forgiveness of this irregularity. It was his zeal that had called them together in such haste, and he would not that any should fare the worse for being straitned of time in their preparation: he therefore thought himself concerned to be an intercessor for those that eat the passover otherwise than it was written, that there might not be wrath upon them from the Lord. His prayer was,

1. A short prayer, but to the purpose. *The good Lord pardon every one* in the congregation that has fixed, engaged, or prepared his heart to those services, tho' the ceremonial preparation be wanting. Note, 1. The great thing required in our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances is, that we prepare our hearts to seek him; that we be sincere and upright in all we do, and the inward man be engaged and employed in it, and we make heart-work of it, it is all nothing without this. *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part.* Hezekiah doth not pray that this might be dispensed with, nor that the want of other things might be pardoned where there was not this, for *this is the one thing needful, that we seek God, his favour, his honour, and that we set our hearts to do it.* 2. Where this sincerity and fixedness of heart is, yet it is possible there may be many defects and infirmities, both the frame of the spirit and the performance of the service short of the purification of the sanctuary. Corruptions not so fully conquered, thoughts not so closely fixed, affections not so lively, faith not so operative as it should be, here is a defect in sanctuary-purification; there is nothing perfect under the sun, nor a just man that doeth good, and sinneth not. 3. These defects need pardoning, healing grace; for omissions are sins in duty, as well as of duty. If God should deal with us in strict justice according to the best of our performances, we were undone. 4. The way to obtain pardon for our deficiencies in duty, and all the iniquities of our holy things, is to seek it of God by prayer; it is not so a pardon of course, but that it must be obtained by petition through the blood of Christ. 5. In this prayer we must take encouragement from the goodness of God. *The good Lord pardon;* for when he proclaimed his goodness, he insisted most upon this branch of it, *forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* 6. It is the duty of those that have the charge of others, not only to look to themselves, but to those also that are under their charge, to see where in they are wanting, and to pray for them; as Hezekiah here. See *Job i. 5.*

2. A successful prayer: *the Lord hearkned to Hezekiah,* was greatly well-pleased with his pious concern for the congregation, and in answer to his prayer, *healed the people,* *ver. 20.* not only did not lay their sin to their charge, but graciously accepted their services notwithstanding; for healing notes not only forgiveness, *Isa. vi. 10. Psal. ciii. 3.* but comfort and peace, *Isa. lvii. 18. Mal. iv. 2.*

21. And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem, kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests prai-

fed the LORD day by day, *singing* with loud instruments unto the LORD. 22. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD; and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace-offerings, and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers. 23. And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept other seven days with gladness. 24. For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks, and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks, and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. 25. And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. 26. So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem. 27. ¶ Then the priests the Levites arose, and blessed the people; and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.

After the passover followed the feast of unleavened bread, which continued seven days. How that was observed we are here told, and every thing in this account looks pleasant and lively.

1. Abundance of sacrifices were offered to God in peace-offerings, by which they both acknowledged and implored the favour of God, and on part of which the offerers feasted with their friends during these seven days, *ver. 22.* in token of their communion with God, and the comfort they took in his favour, and their reconciliation to him. To keep up this part of the service that God's altar might be abundantly regaled with the fat and blood, and his priests and people with the flesh of the peace-offerings, Hezekiah gave out of his own stock one thousand bullocks, and seven thousand sheep, and the princes, excited by his pious example, gave the same number of bullocks, and a greater number of sheep, and all for peace-offerings, *ver. 24.* By this God was honoured, the joy of the festival was kept up, and the strangers were encouraged to come again to Jerusalem. It was generously done of the king and the princes, thus plentifully to entertain the whole congregation: but what is a great estate good for, but that it puts men into a capacity of doing so much the more good. Christ feasted those that followed him. I believe neither Hezekiah nor his princes were the poorer at the year's end, for this their pious liberality.

2. Many good prayers were put up to God, with the peace-offerings, *ver. 22.* They made confession to the Lord God of their fathers, in which the intent and meaning of the peace-offerings was directed and explained. When the priests sprinkled the blood and burnt the fat, they made confession, so did the people when they feasted on their part. They made a religious confession of their relation to God and dependence upon him; a penitent confession of their sins and infirmities; a thankful confession of God's mercies to them; and a supplicatory confession of their wants and desires; and in all these had an eye to God as *the God of their fathers, a God in covenant with them.*

3. There was a great deal of good preaching. The Levites (whose office it was, *Deut. xxxiii. 10.*) taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord, read and opened the scriptures, and instructed the congregation concerning God, and their duty to him; and great need there was of it, after so long a famine of the word as had been in the last reign. Hezekiah did not himself preach, but he spake comfortably to the Levites that did, attended their preaching, commended their diligence, and assured them of his protection and countenance; and thereby encouraged them to study hard, and take pains, and put a reputation upon them, that the people might respect and regard them the more. Princes and magistrates by owning and encouraging faithful and laborious preachers, greatly serve the interest of God's kingdom among men.

4. They sung psalms every day, *ver. 21.* The Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day, both with songs and musical instruments: Thus expressing their own, and exciting one another's joy in God, and thankfulness to him. Praising God should be much of our work in our religious assemblies.

5. Having kept the seven days of the feast in this religious manner, they had so much comfort in it that they kept other seven days, *ver. 23.* They did not institute any new worships, but repeated and continued the old. The case was extraordinary, they had been long without the ordinance, guilt had been contracted by the neglect of it. They had now got a very great congregation together, and were in a devout serious frame; they knew not when they might have such another opportunity, and therefore could not now find in their hearts to part till they had doubled the time. Many of them were a great way from home, and had business in the country to look after, for being in the second month they were in the midst of their harvest, yet they were in no haste to return,



return, the zeal of God's house made them forget themselves, and their secular affairs. How far unlike those who snuffed at God's service, and said, *What a weariness is it?* or those who asked, *When will the sabbath be gone?* The servants of God should abound in his work.

6. All this they did *with gladness*, ver. 23. they all rejoiced, and particularly *the strangers*, ver. 25. *So there was great joy in Jerusalem*, ver. 26. Never was the like since the dedication of the temple in Solomon's time. Note, Holy duties should be performed with holy gladness; we should be forward to them, and take pleasure in them, relish the sweetness of communion with God, and look upon it as matter of unspeakable joy and comfort that we are thus favoured, and have such earnestness of everlasting joy.

7. The congregation was at length dismissed with a solemn blessing, ver. 27. (1.) The priest pronounced it; for it was part of their office to *bless the people*, Numb. vi. 22, 23. in which they were both the peoples mouth to God, by way of prayer; and God's mouth to the people by way of promise; for their blessing included both. In it they testified both their desire of the peoples welfare, and their dependence upon God and that word of his grace, to which they commended them. What a comfort is it to a congregation, to be sent home thus crowned. (2.) God said Amen to it. The voice of the priests, when they *blessed the people*, was heard in heaven, and came up to the habitation of God's holiness. When they pronounced the blessing, God commended, and perhaps gave some sensible token of the ratification of it. The prayer that comes up to heaven in a cloud of incense, will come down again to this earth in showers of blessings.

## C H A P. XXXI.

*We have here a further account of that blessed reformation which Hezekiah was a glorious instrument of, and what further happy advances he made in it.* (1.) All the remnants of idolatry were destroyed and abolished, ver. 1. (2.) The priests and Levites were set to work again, every man in his place, ver. 2. (3.) Care was taken for their maintenance. (1.) The royal bounty to the clergy, and for the support of the temple-service, was duly paid, ver. 3. (2.) Orders were given for the raising of the peoples quota, ver. 4. (3.) The people thereupon brought in their dues abundantly, ver. 5—10. (4.) Commissioners were appointed for the due distribution of what was brought in, ver. 11—19. Lastly, Here is the general praise of Hezekiah's sincerity in all his undertakings, ver. 20, 21.

1. **N**OW when all this was finished, all Israel that were present, went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places, and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned every man to his possession into their own cities. 2. ¶ And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt-offerings, and for peace-offerings, to minister and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD. 3. He appointed also the kings portion of his substance, for the burnt-offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the LORD. 4. Moreover, he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem, to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD. 5. ¶ And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of corn, wine, and oyl, and honey, and of all the increase of the field, and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. 6. And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid them by heaps. 7. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. 8. And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. 9. Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. 10. And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok, answered him, and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house

of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store.

We have here an account of what was done after the passover: What was wanting in the solemnities of preparation for it before, was made up in that which is better, a due improvement of it after. When the religious exercises of a Lord's-day, or a communion, are finished, we must not think that then the work is done: No, then the hardest part of our work begins, which is to exemplify the impressions of the ordinance upon our minds in all the instances of a holy conversation. So it was here; when all this was finished, there was more to be done.

1. They applied themselves with vigour to destroy all the monuments of idolatry. The king had done what he could of this kind, 2 Kings xviii. 4. but the people could discover those profane reliques, which escaped the eye of the king's officers, and therefore they went out to see what they could do, ver. 1. This was done immediately after the passover. Note, The comfort of communion with God should kindle in us a holy zeal and indignation against sin, against every thing that is offensive to God. If our hearts have been made to burn within us at an ordinance, that spirit of burning will consume the dross of corruption, *What have I now to do any more with idols?* Their zeal here in destroying the images and groves, the high places and altars, appeared, (1.) In that they did this not only in the cities of Judah and Benjamin, but in those of Ephraim and Manasseh; some think those cities are meant, which were come under the protection, and the jurisdiction of the kings of Judah; others think, that Hoshea, king of Israel, not forbidding it, their zeal carried them out to the destruction of idolatry, even in many parts of his kingdom. At least those that came out of Ephraim and Manasseh to keep the passover, (as many did, chap. xxx. 18.) destroyed all their own images and groves, and did the like for as many more as they had influence upon, or could make interest in for leave to do it, we should not only reform ourselves, but do all we can to reform others too. (2.) They destroyed all, they utterly destroyed all, they spared none for favour or affection, either to the images or to their worshippers; tho' never so ancient, never so costly, never so beautiful, and never so well patronized, yet they must all down. Those that sincerely set themselves against sin will set themselves against all sin. (3.) They would not return to their houses, tho' they had been long absent, till this was done: They could not be easy, nor think themselves safe in their cities, as long as the images and groves, those betrayers and destroyers of their country, were left standing. Perhaps the prophet Isaiah pointed to this, when a little before he spoke of a day, in which men should cast away the very idols that themselves had made. So surprizing was this blessed change, Isa. ii. 20.—xxx. 6, 7.

2. Hezekiah revived and restored the courses of the priests and Levites, which David had appointed, and which had of late been put out of course, ver. 2. The temple-service was put into method again, to run in the old channel: Every man was made to know his work, his place, his time, and what was expected from him. Good order contributes much to the carrying on of a good work. The priests were appointed in their courses for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, the Levites in their courses were some to minister to the priests, others to give thanks and praise. See 1 Chron. xxiii. 4, 5. And all this in the gates or courts of the tents of the Lord. The temple is here called a tent, because the temple-privileges are moveable things, and this temple was shortly to be removed.

3. He appropriated a branch of the revenue of his crown to the maintenance and support of the altar; tho' the people were to be at the charge of the daily offerings, and those on the sabbaths, new moons, and feasts, yet rather than they should be burthened with the expence, he allowed out of his own estate, or out of his exchequer for all those offerings, ver. 3. It was a generous act of piety, wherein he consulted both God's honour and his peoples ease, as a faithful servant to him, and a tender father to them. Let princes and great men reckon that well bestowed, and set out to the best interest, which they give for the support and encouragement of religion in their country.

4. He issued out an order to the inhabitants of Jerusalem first, ver. 4. (that they who were nearest the temple, and both saved and got by being so, might give a good example to others) but which was afterwards extended to, or at least admitted, by the cities of Judah, that they should carefully pay in their dues by the law, to the priests and Levites. This had been long neglected which made the work to be neglected: For a scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry. But Hezekiah having himself been liberal, may with a good grace require his subjects to be just to the temple-service. And observe the end he aims at in recovering and restoring to the priests and Levites their portion, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord, in the study of it, and in doing their duty according to it. Observe here, (1.) That it is fit ministers should be not only maintained, but encouraged, that they should not only be kept also to do their work, but that they should have wherewith to live comfortably, that they may do it with cheerfulness. (2.) That yet they are to be maintained not



in idleness, pride, and luxury, but in *the law of the Lord*, in their observance of it themselves, and teaching others the good knowledge of it.

5. The people thereupon brought in their tithes very readily; they wanted nothing but to be called upon; and therefore *as soon as the commandment came abroad*, the first-fruits and all the holy things were duly brought in, *ver. 5, 6*. What the priests had occasion for, for themselves and their families, they made use of, and the overplus was *laid in heaps*, *ver. 6*. All harvest-time they were increasing these heaps, as the fruits of the earth were gathered in, for God was to have his dues out of them all: Tho' a prescription may be to a *modus decimandi*; yet it cannot be pleaded *pro non decimando*. When harvest ended they finished their heaps, *ver. 7*. Now here we have, (1.) The account given to Hezekiah concerning those heaps: He *questioned with the priests and Levites* concerning them, why they did not use what was paid in, but hoarded it up thus? *ver. 9*. To which it was answered, that they had made use of all they had occasion for, for the maintenance of themselves and their families, and for their winter-store, and this was that which was left over and above, *ver. 10*. They did not hoard these heaps for covetousness, but to shew what plentiful provision God by his law had made for them, if they could but have it collected, and brought in. And that they who conscientiously gave God his dues out of their estates, bring a blessing upon all they have; *Since they began to bring in the offerings, the Lord has blessed his people*. See for this, *Hag. ii. 19*. Try me, faith God, if you will not otherwise trust me, whether upon your bringing the tithes into the store-house, you have not a blessing poured upon you, *Mal. iii. 10, 11*. *Ezek. xlv. 30*. (2.) The acknowledgment which the king and princes made of it, *ver. 8*. They gave thanks to God for his good providence, which gave them something to bring, and his good grace which gave them hearts to bring it: And they also *blessed the people*, i. e. commended them for their doing well now, without reproaching them for their former neglects. It is observable, that after they had tasted the sweetness of God's ordinances in the late comfortable passover they had kept, they were thus free in maintaining the temple-service. They that experience the benefit of a settled ministry, will not grudge the expence of it.

11. ¶ Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared them, 12. And brought in the offerings, and the tithes, and the dedicate things faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was the next. 13. And Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Afahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, were overseers under the hand of Cononiah, and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God. 14. And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, was over the free-will-offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things. 15. And next him were Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priest, in their set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small. 16. Beside their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, even unto every one that entred into the house of the LORD, his daily portion for their service in their charges, according to their courses; 17. Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses: 18. And to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness. 19. Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, which were in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies, among the Levites. 20. ¶ And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God. 21. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law and in the commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

Here is, 1. Two particular instances of the care of Hezekiah concerning church-matters; having put them into good order, to keep them so. The tithes and other holy things being brought in, he provided,

(1.) That they should be carefully laid up, and not left exposed in loose heaps, liable to be wasted and embezzled; he ordered chambers to be made ready in some of the courts of the temple, for store-chambers, *ver. 11*. and into them the offerings were brought, and there kept under lock and key, *ver. 12, 13*. Treasurers or store-keepers were appointed which had the over-sight of them to see that *moth and rust* did not corrupt them, nor *thieves break through to steal*. This wisdom of laying up the surpluse in days of plenty, we may learn from the ant, who *provideth meat in summer*. The laying up in store what was brought in, was an encouragement to people to pay in their contributions. That will be given cheerfully to the publick, which appears to be well husbanded.

(2.) That they should be faithfully laid out, to the uses they were intended for. Church-treasures are not to be hoarded any longer than till there is occasion for them, even the rust will be a witness against them that do. Officers were appointed, men (no doubt) of approved wisdom, and faithfulness, to *distribute the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things* among the priests, *ver. 14*. and to see that they all had a competent maintenance for themselves and their families. The law provided sufficient for them all, and therefore if some had too little it must be because others had too much; to prevent such inequality these officers were to go by some certain rule of proportion in the disposal of the incomes of the temple. It is said of the priests here, *ver. 18*. *that in their set office they sanctified themselves; in faith, they sanctified themselves*; so the word is, i. e. (as bishop Patrick explains it) they attended their ministry at the house of God, not doubting but they should be provided of all things necessary; now because they served God in that confidence, care was taken that they should not be made ashamed of their hope. They that sanctify themselves to God and his service in faith, believing that he will see them want nothing that is good for them, *verily they shall be fed*.

Out of the offerings of the Lord, distribution was made (1.) To the priests in the cities, *ver. 15*. who staid at home while their brethren went to Jerusalem, and did good there in *teaching the good knowledge of the Lord*; the preaching priests were maintained as well as the sacrificing priests, and they that abode by the stuff, as they that warred the warfare. (2.) To those that *entred into the house of the Lord*, all the males from three years old and upward, for the male children even at that tender age, it seems, were allowed to come into the temple with their parents, and shared with them in this distribution, *ver. 16*. (3.) Even the Levites from twenty years old and upward had their share, *ver. 17*. (4.) The wives and children of the priests and Levites had a comfortable maintenance out of those offerings, *ver. 18*. In maintaining ministers regard must be had to their families, that not they only but theirs may have food convenient. In some countries where ministers have their salary paid them by the state, an addition is made to it upon the birth of a child. (5.) The priests in the country, that lived in the fields of the suburbs were not overlooked in this ministrations, *ver. 19*. They also had their share who were inhabitants of the villages, tho' they may be supposed to live at a less expence.

2. A general character of Hezekiah's services for the support of religion, *ver. 20, 21*. (1.) That his pious zeal reached to all the parts of his kingdom, *thus he did throughout all Judah*, every part of the country, and not those only that lay next him shared in the good fruits of his government. (2.) That he sincerely designed to please God, and approved himself to him in all he did: he wrought that which was good before the Lord his God; all his care was to do that which should be accepted of God, which was right, (i. e. agreeable to natural equity) and truth (i. e. agreeable to divine revelation, and his covenant with God) before the Lord; to do according to that law which is holy, just, and good. (3.) That what he began, he went through with, prosecuted it with vigour, and did it with all his heart. (4.) That all his good intentions were brought to a good issue; whatever he did in the service of the house of God, and in the government of his kingdom, he prospered in it. What is undertaken with a sincere regard to the glory of God, will succeed to our own honour and comfort at last.

## C H A P. XXXII.

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the reign of Hezekiah. (1.) The descent which Sennacherib made upon him, and the care he took to fortify himself, his city, and the minds of his people, against that enemy, *ver. 1—8*. (2.) The insolent blasphemous letters and messages which Sennacherib sent him, *ver. 9—19*. (3.) The real answer God gave to Sennacherib's blasphemies, and to Hezekiah's prayers, in the total rout of the Assyrian army, to the shame of Sennacherib, and the honour of Hezekiah, *ver. 20—23*. (4.) Hezekiah's sickness and his recovery from that; his sin and his recovery from that, with the honours that attended him living and dead, *ver. 24—33*.



1. **A**FTER these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entred into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself. 2. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem: 3. He took counsel with his princes, and his mighty men, to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. 4. So there was gathered much people together, who stoppt all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water? 5. Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance. 6. And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, 7. Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us, than with him. 8. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Here is, 1. The formidable design of Sennacherib against Hezekiah's kingdom, and the vigorous attempt he made upon it. This Sennacherib was now, as Nebuchadnezzar was afterwards, the terror and scourge and great oppressor of that part of the world, that aimed to raise a boundless monarchy for himself upon the ruins of all his neighbours; his predecessor, Salmanassar, had lately made himself master of the kingdom of Israel, and carried the ten tribes captive: Sennacherib thought in like manner to win Judah to himself. Pride and ambition put men upon grasping at universal dominion; and it is observable that just about this time Rome was built by Romulus, a city which afterwards came to reign more than any other had done over the kings of the earth. Sennacherib invaded Judah immediately after the reformation of it, and the re-establishment of religion in it, *After these things he entred into Judah*, ver. 1. (1.) It was well ordered by the divine providence that he did not give them this disturbance before the reformation was finished and established, which might have put a stop to it. (2.) Perhaps he intended to chastise Hezekiah for destroying that idolatry, which he himself was devoted to; he looked upon Hezekiah as profane in what he had done, and that he had thrown himself out of the divine protection, and might therefore be easily made a prey of. (3.) God ordered it at this time that he might have an opportunity of shewing himself strong on the behalf of this returning reforming people. He brought this trouble upon them that he might have the honour, and might put on them the honour, of their deliverance. *After these things and the establishment thereof* one would expect to hear of nothing but perfect peace, and that none durst meddle with a people thus qualified for the divine favour, yet the next news we hear is, that a threatening destroying army enters the country and is ready to lay all waste: it is possible we may be in the way of our duty, and yet meet with trouble and danger; God orders it so for the trial of our confidence in him, and the manifestation of his care concerning us. The little opposition which Sennacherib met with in entering Judah, made him think of nothing but all was his own. He thought to win all the fenced cities, ver. 1. and purposed to fight against Jerusalem, ver. 2. See 2 Kings xviii. 7, 13.

2. The preparation which Hezekiah prudently made against this storm that threatened him. He took counsel with his princes what he should do, what measures he should take, and with their advice he provided, (1.) That the country should give him a cold reception, for he took care he should find no water in it, and then his army must perish for thirst, or at least that there should be a scarcity of water, by which it would be weakened, and disfitted for service. A powerful army, if it want water but a few days, will be but a heap of dry dust. All hands were set on work presently, to stop up the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of that land, turning that (it is probable) into the city by pipes under ground. Such as this is the policy commonly practised now-a-days, of destroying the forage before an invading army. (2.) That the city should give him a warm reception: in order to this, he repaired the wall, raised towers, and made darts, or, as it is in the margin, *swords or weapons*, and shields in abundance, ver. 5. and appointed captains, ver. 6. Note, Those that trust God with their safety, must yet use proper means for their safety, else they tempt him, and do not trust him. *God will provide*, but so must we also.

3. The encouragement which he gave to his people to depend upon God in this distress. He gathered them together in a broad open

street, and spake comfortably to them, ver. 6. He had a good heart on it himself, and was confident it would issue well; was not like his father, who had much guilt to terrify him, and no faith to encourage him; so that in a time of publick danger, *his heart was moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind*; and then no marvel that *the heart of his people was so too*, Isa. vii. 2. With what he said, he put life into his people, his captains especially, and spake to their heart, as the word is: (1.) He endeavours to keep down their fears. *Be strong and courageous*, do not think of surrendering the city, or capitulating, but resolve to hold it out to the last man: do not think of losing the city, nor of falling into the enemy's hand; there is no danger. Let the soldiers be bold and brave, make good their posts, stand to their arms, and fight manfully, and let the citizens encourage them to do so. *Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria*. The prophet had thus encouraged them from God, Isa. x. 24. *Be not afraid of the Assyrian*; and here the king from him. Now it was that *the sinners in Zion were afraid*, Isa. xxxiii. 14. but the righteous dwelt on high, ver. 15, 16. and meditated terror, so as to conquer it; ver. 18. which refers to this here. (2.) He endeavours to keep up their faith, in order to the silencing and suppressing of their fears. He hath a multitude with him, and yet there be more with us than with him: for we have God with us, and how many do you reckon him for? with him is an arm of flesh, which he trusts to; but with us is the Lord, whose power is irresistible; our God, whose promise is inviolable; a God in covenant with us, to help us, and to fight our battles, not only to help us to fight them, but to fight them for us, if he pleaseth: and so he did here. Note, A believing confidence in God, will help us above the prevailing fear of man. He that feareth the fury of the oppressor, forgetteth the Lord his maker, Isa. li. 12, 13. It is likely, Hezekiah said more to this purpose. And the people rested themselves upon what he said, not merely upon his word, but on the things he said concerning the presence of God with them, and his power to relieve them. The belief of this made them easy. Let the good subjects and soldiers of Jesus Christ rest themselves thus upon his word, and boldly say, *Since God is for us, who can be against us?*

9. ¶ After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem (but he himself laid siege against Lachish, and all his power with him) unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that were at Jerusalem, saying, 10. Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem? 11. Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over your selves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The LORD our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 12. Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places, and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it? 13. Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of other lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand? 14. Who was there among all the gods of those nations, that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand? 15. Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no God of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand? 16. And his servants spake yet more against the LORD God, and against his servant Hezekiah. 17. He wrote also letters to rail on the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of other lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand. 18. Then they cried with a loud voice in the Jews speech unto the people of Jerusalem that were on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them, that they might take the city. 19. And they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, which were the work of the hands of man. 20. And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amos prayed, and cried to heaven. 21. ¶ And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria: so he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels, slew him there with the sword.



22. Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria; and from the hand of all other; and guided them on every side. 23. And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

This story of the rage and blasphemy of Sennacherib, Hezekiah's prayer, and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the destruction of the Assyrian army, we had more at large in the book of Kings, 2 Kings xviii, and xix. It is contracted here, yet large enough to shew these three things:

1. The impiety and malice of the church's enemies. Sennacherib has his hands full in besieging Lachish, *ver. 9.* but hears that Hezekiah is fortifying Jerusalem, and encouraging his people to stand it out; and therefore before he come in person to besiege it, he sends messengers to make speeches, and himself writes letters to Hector Hezekiah and his people into a surrender of the city. See (1.) His great malice against the king of Judah, in endeavouring to withdraw his subjects from their allegiance to him. He doth not treat with Hezekiah, as a man of honour would have done, nor propose fair terms to him, but useth mean and base artifices, unbecoming a crowned head, to terrify the common people, and persuade them to desert him: He represents Hezekiah as one that designed to deceive his subjects into their ruin, and betray them to *famine and thirst*, *ver. 11.* As one that had done them great wrong, and exposed them already to the divine displeasure by taking away the high-places and altars, *ver. 12.* and that against the common interest of his people held out against a force, that would certainly be their ruin, *ver. 15.* (2.) His great impiety against the God of Israel, the God of Jerusalem, he is called, *ver. 19.* because that was the place he had chosen to put his name there, and because that was the place that was now threatened by the enemy, and which the divine providence had under its special protection. This proud blasphemer compares the great Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth, with the dunghill-gods of the nations, the work of mens hands, and thinks him no more able to deliver his worshippers, than they were to deliver theirs, *ver. 19.* As if an infinite and eternal Spirit had no more wisdom and power than a stone, or the flock of a tree. He boasts of his triumphs over the gods of the nations, that they could none of them protect their people, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* and thence infers not only, *How shall your God deliver you?* *ver. 14.* but as if he were inferior to them all, *How much less shall your God deliver you?* as if he were less able to help than any of them. Thus did they rail; rail in writing (which being more deliberate, is so much the worse) *on the Lord God of Israel*, as if he were a cypher, and an empty name, like all the rest, *ver. 17.* Sennacherib in the instructions he gave, said more than enough; but as if his blasphemies had been too little, his servants, who learned insolence from their master, spake yet more than he bid them *against the Lord God, and his servant Hezekiah*, *ver. 16.* And God repents, and will reckon for what is said against his servants, as well as what is said against himself. And all this was intended to frighten the people from their hope in God; which David's enemies sought to take him off from, *Psal. xi. 1.—xlii. 10.* saying, *There is no help for him in God*, *Psal. iii. 2.—lxxi. 11.* Thus they hoped to take the city by weakening the hands of those that should defend it. Satan in his temptations aims to destroy our faith in God's all-sufficiency, knowing he gains his point if he can do that, as we keep our ground, if our *faith fail not*, *Luke xxii. 32.*

2. The duty and interest of the church's friends; and that is, in the day of distress to pray and cry to heaven: So Hezekiah did, and the prophet Isaiah, *ver. 20.* It was a happy time when the king and the prophet joined thus in prayer. Is any troubled? Is any terrified? Let them pray: So we engage God for us, so we encourage ourselves in him. Praying to God, is here called crying to heaven, because we are in prayer to eye him as our Father in heaven, whence he beholds the children of men, and where he has prepared his throne.

3. The power and goodness of the church's God: He is able both to control his enemies, be they never so high; and to relieve his friends, be they never so low: And as the blasphemies of his enemies engage him against them, *Deut. xxxii. 27.* so the prayers of his people engage him for them; they did so here: (1.) The army of the Assyrians was cut off by the sword of an angel, which triumphed particularly in the slaughter of the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, who defied the sword of any man. God delights to abase the proud and secure. The Targum faith, the Word of the Lord (the Eternal Word) sent Gabriel to do this execution, and that it was done with lightning, and in the passover-night; that was the night in which the angel destroyed the first-born of Egypt. But that was not all, (2.) The king of the Assyrians having received this disgrace, was cut off by the sword of his own sons: They that *came forth out of his own bowels slew him*, *ver. 21.* Thus was he mortified first, and then murdered; shamed first, and then slain. Evil pursues sinners; and when they escape one mischief, they run upon another unseen.

Now by this work of wonder (1.) God was glorified, as the protector of his people: Thus he saved Jerusalem, not only from the hand of Sennacherib, but from the hand of all other; for such a deliverance as this, was an earnest of much mercy in store; and he guided them, *i. e.* he guarded them on every side. God defends his people by directing them, shews them what they should do, and so saves them from what is designed or done against them. For this *many brought gifts unto the Lord*, when they saw the great power of God in the defence of his people, strangers were thereby induced to supplicate his favour, and enemies to deprecate his wrath; and both brought gifts to his temple in token of that their care and desire. (2.) Hezekiah was magnified as the favourite and particular care of heaven; *many brought presents to him*, (*ver. 22, 23.*) in token of the honour they had for him, and to make an interest in him. By the favour of God, enemies are lost, and friends gained.

24. ¶ In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. 25. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit *done* unto him: for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. 26. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart (*both* he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem) so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. 27. ¶ And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels: 28. Store-houses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oyl; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. 29. Moreover, he provided him cities, and possession of flocks, and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much. 30. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water-course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west-side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. 31. ¶ Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was *done* in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all *that was* in his heart. 32. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 33. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

Here we conclude the story of Hezekiah, with an account of three things concerning him.

1. His sickness, and his recovery from it, *ver. 24.* It is but briefly mentioned here, we had a large narrative of it, 2 Kings xx. His disease seemed likely to be mortal. In the extremity of it he prayed, God answered him, and gave him a sign that he should recover; the going back of the sun ten degrees.

2. His sin, and his repentance for that; this was also more largely related, 2 Kings xx. 12, &c. yet several things are here observed concerning it, which we had not there.

(1.) The occasion of it was the king of Babylon's sending an honourable embassy to him, to congratulate his recovery: But here it is added, that they came to enquire of *the wonder that was done in the land*, *ver. 31.* either the destruction of the Assyrian army, or, the going back of the sun: The Assyrians were their enemies, they came to enquire concerning their fall, that they might triumph in it: The sun was their god, they came to enquire concerning the favour he had shewn to Hezekiah, that they might honour him, whom their god honoured, *ver. 31.* These miracles were wrought to alarm and awaken a stupid, careless world, and turn them from dumb and lame idols to the living God; and men were startled by them, but not converted till a greater wonder was done in that land in the appearing of Jesus Christ, *Matth. ii. 1, 2.*

(2.) God left him to himself in it, to try him, *ver. 31.* God by the power of his almighty grace could have prevented the sin; but he permitted it for wise and holy ends, that by this trial, and his weakness in it, he might know, *i. e.* it might be known (an usual Hebraism) what was in his heart; that he was not so perfect in grace, as he thought he was, but had his follies and infirmities as other men: God left him to himself to be proud of his wealth, to keep him from being proud of his holiness. It is good for us to know ourselves, and our own weakness and sinfulness, that we may not be conceited, or self-confident, but may always think meanly of ourselves, and live in a dependence upon divine grace.



We know not the corruption of our own hearts, nor what we shall do if God leave us to ourselves. *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

(3.) His sin was, that *his heart was lifted up*, ver. 25. He was proud of the honour God had put upon him in so many instances; the honour his neighbours did him in bringing him presents; and now that the king of Babylon should send an embassy to him to carefs and court him; this exalted him above measure. When Hezekiah had destroyed other idolatries, he began to idolize himself. O what need have great men, and good men, and useful men, to study their own infirmities and follies, and their obligations to free-grace, that they may never think highly of themselves, and to beg earnestly of God, that he will hide pride from them, and always keep them humble.

(4.) The aggravation of his sin was, that he made so ill a return to God for his favours to him, making even those favours the food and fuel of his pride, ver. 25. *He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.* Note, It is justly expected that they who have received mercy from God, should study to make some suitable returns for the mercies they have received; and if they do not, their ingratitude will certainly be charged upon them. Tho' we cannot render an equivalent, or the payment of a debt, we must render the acknowledgment of a favour, *What shall I render*, that may be so accepted? *Psal. cxvi. 12.*

(5.) The divine displeasure he was under for this sin; tho' it was but a heart-sin, and the overt-act seemed not only innocent but civil, the shewing of his treasures to a friend, yet wrath came upon him and his kingdom for it, ver. 25. Note, Pride is a sin that God hates as much as any other, and particularly in his own people. They that exalt themselves must expect to be abased, and put under humbling providences. Wrath came on David for his pride in numbering the people.

(6.) His repentance for this sin. *He humbled himself for the pride of his heart.* Note, 1. Tho' God may, for wise and holy ends, suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it; they *shall not be utterly cast down*. 2. Heart-sins are to be repented of, tho' they go no further. 3. Self-humiliation is a necessary branch of repentance. 4. Pride of heart, by which we have lifted up our selves, is a sin for which we ought in a special manner to humble ourselves. 5. People ought to mourn for the sins of their rulers. The inhabitants of Jerusalem humbled themselves with Hezekiah; either because they knew they also had been guilty of the same sin, or at least feared they might share in the punishment. When David in his pride numbred the people, they all smarted for it.

(7.) The reprieve granted thereupon. The wrath came not in his days; while he lived, there was peace and truth; so much doth repentance avail to put by, at least to put off, the tokens of God's anger.

3. Here is the honour done to Hezekiah: (1.) By the providence of God while he lived. He had *exceeding much riches and honour*, ver. 27. replenished his stores, victualled his camps, fortified his city, and did all he wished to do; for *God had given him substance very much*, ver. 29. Among his great performances, his turning the water-course of Gihon is mentioned, ver. 30. which was done upon occasion of Sennacherib's invasion, ver. 34. The water had come into that which is called the *old pool*, Isa. xxii. 11. and the *upper pool*, Isa. vii. 3. but he gathered the waters into a new place, for the greater convenience of the city, called the *lower pool*, Isa. xxii. 9. And in general, he *prospered in all his works*, for they were good works. (2.) By the respects paid to his memory when he was dead. (1.) The prophet Isaiah wrote his life and reign, ver. 32. His acts and his goodness, or piety, part of the honour of which is to be recorded and remembered for example to others. (2.) The people *did him honour at his death*, ver. 33. buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres, made as great burning for him, as for Aza; or, which is a much greater honour, made great lamentation for him, as for Josiah. See how the honour of serious godliness is manifested in the consciences of men. Tho' it is feared the generality of the people did not heartily comply with the reforming kings, yet they could not but praise their endeavours for reformation, and the memory of those kings were blessed among them. It is a debt we owe to those who have been eminently useful in their day, to do them honour at their death, when they are out of the reach of flattery, and we have seen the end of their conversation: The due payment of this debt, will be an encouragement to others to do likewise.

## C H A P. XXXIII.

In this chapter we have the history of the reign (1.) Of Manasseh, who reigned long. (1.) His wretched apostasy from God, and revolt to idolatry, and all wickedness, ver. 1—10. (2.) His happy return to God, in his affliction; his repentance, ver. 11—13. His reformation, ver. 15—17. And prosperity, ver. 14. with the conclusion of his reign, ver. 18—20. (2.) Of Amon, who reigned very wickedly, ver. 21—23. and soon ended his days unhappily, 24, 25.

1. **M**ANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: 2. But did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. 3. ¶ For he built again the high places, which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4. Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. 5. And he built altars for all the host of heaven, in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 7. And he set a carved image (the idol which he had made) in the house of God, of which God had said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever. 8. Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law, and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. 9. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. 10. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.

We have here an account of the great wickedness of Manasseh, it is the same almost word for word with that which we had, 2 Kings xxi. 1—9. and took a melancholy view of; it is no such pleasing subject that we should delight to dwell upon it again. This foolish young prince, in contradiction to the good example, and good education his father gave him, abandoned himself to all impiety: transcribed the abominations of the heathen, ver. 2. ruined the established religion, and unravelled his father's glorious reformation, ver. 3. profaned the house of God with his idolatry, ver. 4, 5. dedicated his children to Moloch, and made the Devil's lying oracles his guides and his counsellors, ver. 6. In contempt of the choice God had made of Sion to be his rest for ever, and Israel to be his covenant people, ver. 8. and the fair terms he stood upon with him, he embraced other gods, profaned God's chosen temple, and debauched his chosen people, he *made them to err*, and *do worse than the heathen*, ver. 9. for if the unclean spirit return, he brings with him *seven other spirits more wicked than himself*. That which aggravated the sin of Manasseh was that God *spoke to him and his people*, by the prophets, *but they would not hearken*, ver. 10. We may here admire the grace of God in speaking to them, and their obstinacy in turning a deaf ear to him, that either their badness did not quite turn away his goodness, but still he waited to be gracious; or that his goodness did not turn them from their badness, but still they hated to be reformed.

Now from this let us learn (1.) That it is no new thing, but a very sad thing, for the children of godly parents to turn aside from that good way of God in which they have been trained up. Parents may give many good things to their children, but they cannot give them grace. 2. Corruptions in worship are such diseases of the church, as even then, when they seemed to be cured, it is very apt to relapse into again. 3. The god of this world hath strangely blinded mens minds, and has a wonderful power over those that are led captive by him, else he could not draw them from God their best friend, to depend upon their sworn enemy.

11. ¶ Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. 12. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, 13. And prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God. 14. Now after this, he built a wall without the city of David, on the west-side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish-gate, and compassed about



about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. 15. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. 16. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings, and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. 17. Nevertheless, the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only. 18. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. 19. His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespasss, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the saying of the seers. 20. ¶ So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

We have seen Manasseh by his wickedness undoing the good that his father had done; here we have him by repentance undoing the evil that he himself had done. It is strange this was not so much as mentioned in the book of Kings, nor doth any thing appear there to the contrary, but that he persisted and perished in his sin. But, perhaps the reason was, because the design of that history was to shew the wickedness of the nation which brought destruction upon them, and this repentance of Manasseh, and the benefit of it being personal only, and not national, it is overlooked there; yet here it is fully related, and a memorable instance it is of the riches of God's pardoning mercy, and the power of his renewing grace. Here is,

1. The occasion of Manasseh's repentance; and that was his afflictions: In his distress he did not (like that king Ahaz) trespass yet more against God, but humbled himself, and returned to God. Sanctified afflictions oft prove happy means of conversion. What his distress was we are here told, ver. 11. God brought a foreign enemy upon him; the king of Babylon that courted his father who faithfully served God, invaded him now he was treacherously departed from God. He is here called king of Assyria, because he had made himself master of Assyria, which he would the easier do for the defeat of Sennacherib's army, and the destruction of it before Jerusalem. He aimed at the treasures which the ambassadors had seen, and all those precious things; but God sent him to chastise a sinful people, and reduce a straying prince. The captains took Manasseh among the thorns, in some bush or other, perhaps in his garden, where he had hid himself: Or, it is spoken figuratively; he was perplexed in his counsels, and embarrassed in his affairs: He was, as we say, in the briars, and knew not which way to extricate himself, and so became an easy prey to the Assyrian captains; who, no doubt, plundered his house, and took away what they pleased, as Isaiah had foretold, 2 Kings xx. 17, 18. What was Hezekiah's pride was their prey. They bound Manasseh, who had been held before with the cords of his own iniquity, and carried him prisoner to Babylon. About what time of his reign this was, we are not told; the Jews say it was in his twenty-second year.

2. The expressions of his repentance, ver. 12, 13. when he was in affliction, he had time to bethink himself and reason enough too: He saw what he had brought himself to by his sin; he found the gods he had served unable to help him: He knew that repentance was the only way of restoring his affairs, and therefore to him he returned from whom he had revolted, (1.) He was convinced that Jehovah is the one only living and true God. Then he knew, i. e. he believed and considered that the Lord he was God; he might have known it at a less expence, if he would have given due attendance and credit to the word written and preached: but it was better pay thus dear for the knowledge of God, than perish in ignorance and unbelief. Had he been a prince in the palace of Babylon, it is probable he had been confirmed in his idolatry; but being a captive in the prisons of Babylon, he was convinced of it, and reclaimed from it. (2.) He applied himself to him as his God now, renouncing all others, and resolving to cleave to him only; the God of his fathers, and a God in covenant with him. (3.) He humbled himself greatly before him; was truly sorry for his sins, ashamed of them, and afraid of the wrath of God. It becomes sinners to humble themselves before the face of that God they have offended: It becomes sufferers to humble themselves under the hand of that God that corrects them, and to accept the punishment of their iniquity. Our hearts should be humble under humbling providences; then we accommodate ourselves to them, and answer God's end in them. (4.) He prayed to him; for the pardon of sin, and the return of his favour. Prayer is the relief of penitents, the relief of the afflicted. That is a good prayer,

and very pertinent in this case, which we find among the apocryphal books, entitled, *The prayer of Manasseh, king of Judah, when he was holden captive in Babylon*; whether it was his or no, is uncertain; if it were, in it he gives glory to God, as the God of their fathers and their righteous seed: As the Creator of the world, a God, whose anger is insupportable; and yet his merciful promise unmeasurable: He pleads that God has promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned, and has appointed repentance unto sinners that they may be saved; not unto the just; as to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to me (saith he) that am a sinner; for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea; so he confesseth his sin largely, and aggravates it, pray forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not; pleads, Thou art the God of them that repent, &c. and concludes, Therefore I will praise thee for ever, &c.

3. God's gracious acceptance of his repentance. God was intreated of him, and heard his supplication. Tho' affliction drives us to God, he will not therefore reject us, if in sincerity we seek him, for afflictions are sent on purpose to bring us to him. As a token of God's favour to him he made a way for his escape; afflictions are continued no longer than till they have done their work; when Manasseh is brought back to his God, and to his duty, he shall soon be brought back to his kingdom. See how ready God is to accept and welcome returning sinners, and how swift to shew mercy. Let not great sinners despair, when Manasseh himself, upon his repentance, found favour with God; in him God shewed forth a pattern of long-suffering, as 1 Tim. i. 16. Isa. i. 17.

4. The fruits meet for repentance which he brought forth after his return to his own land, ver. 15, 16. (1.) He turned from his sins. Took away the strange gods, the images of them, and that idol (whatever it was) which he had set up, with so much solemnity in the house of the Lord, as if it had been master of that house; he cast out all the idolatrous altars that were in the mount of the house, and in Jerusalem, as detestable things; now (we hope) he loathed them as much as ever he had loved them, and said to them, get ye hence, Isa. xxx. 22. what have I to do any more with idols? I have had enough of them. (2.) He returned to his duty, for he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had either been abused and broken down by some of the idolatrous priests, or at least neglected and gone out of repair. He sacrificed thereon peace-offerings to implore God's favour, and thank-offerings to praise him for his deliverance. Nay, he now used his power to reform his people, as before he had abused it to corrupt them, He commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. Note, Those that truly repent of their sins will not only return to God themselves, but will do all they can to reduce those that have by their example been seduced, and drawn away from God; else we do not thoroughly (as we ought) undo what we have done amiss, nor make the plaister as wide as the wound. And we find he prevailed to bring them off from their false gods, but not from their high-places, ver. 17. they still sacrificed in them, yet to the Lord their God only; Manasseh could not carry the reformation so far as he had carried the corruption. It is an easy thing to debauch mens manners, but not so easy to reform them again.

5. His prosperity in some measure, after his repentance. He might plainly see it was sin that ruined him; for when he returned to God in a way of duty, God returned to him in a way of mercy: And then he built a wall about the city of David, ver. 14. for by sin he had unwall'd it, and exposed it to the enemy: He also put captains of war in the fenced cities, for the security of his country. Josephus saith, That all the rest of his time he was so changed for the better, that he was looked upon as a very happy man.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of his history. The heads of those things for a full narrative of which we are referred to the other writings that were then extant, are more than of any of the kings, ver. 18, 19. A particular account it seems was kept (1.) Of all his sin, and his trespasss, the high-places he built, the groves and images he set up, before he was humbled. Probably, this was taken from his own confession which he made of his sin, when God gave him repentance, and which he left upon record, and was inserted in a book, entitled, *The words of the seers*; those seers that spake to him, ver. 18. to reprove him for his sin, he sent his confession to when he repented, to be inserted in their memoirs, as a token of his gratitude to them for their kindness in reprov'g him. Thus it becomes penitents to take shame to themselves, to give thanks to their reprovers, and warning to others. (2.) Of the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the Lord, (ver. 10.) the reproofs they gave him for his sin, and their exhortations to repentance. Note, Sinners ought to consider that how little notice soever they take of them, an account is kept of the words of the seers that speak to them from God, to admonish them of their sins, warn them of their danger, and call them to their duty, which will be produced against them in the great day. (3.) Of his prayer to God, (that is twice mentioned, as a remarkable thing) and how God was intreated of him. This was written for the generations to come, that the people that should be created might praise the Lord, for his readiness to receive returning prodigals.

Notice is taken of the place of his burial, not in the sepulchres of the kings, but in his own house; he was buried privately, and nothing



nothing of that honour was done him at his death, that was done to his father. Penitents may recover their comfort sooner than their credit.

21. ¶ Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. 22. But he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images, which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; 23. And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. 24. And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house. 25. ¶ But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon, and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

We have little recorded concerning Amon, but enough unless it were better. Here is,

1. His great wickedness. He did as *Manasseh had done* in the days of his apostasy, ver. 22. They who think this an evidence, that Manasseh did not truly repent, forget how many good kings had wicked sons. Only it should seem, Manasseh was in this defective, that when he *cast out the images*, he did not utterly deface and destroy them according to the law, which required them to *burn the images with fire*, Deut. vii. 5. How necessary that law was, this instance shews; for the *carved images* being only thrown by, and not burnt, Amon knew where to find them, soon sat them up, and sacrificed to them. It is added, to represent him exceeding sinful, and to justify God in cutting him off so soon, (1.) That he out-did his father in sinning: *He trespassed more and more*, ver. 23. His father did ill, but he did worse. They that were joined to idols grew more and more mad upon them. (2.) That he came short of his father in repenting; he *humbled not himself before the Lord, as his father had humbled himself*. He fell like him, but did not get up again like him. It is not so much sin, as impenitence in sin that ruins men; not so much that they offend, as that they do not humble themselves for their offences; not the disease, but the neglect of the remedy.

2. His speedy destruction. He reigned but two years, and then his servants conspired against him, and slew him, ver. 24. Perhaps when Amon sinned, as his father did, in the beginning of his days; he promised himself that he should repent as his father did in the latter end of his days: But his case shews what a madness it is to presume upon that; if he hoped to repent when he was old, he was wretchedly disappointed; for he was cut off when he was young. He rebelled against God, and his own servants rebelled against him. Herein God was righteous, but they were wicked, and justly did the *people of the land* put them to death as traitors. The lives of kings are particularly under the protection of providence, and the laws both of God and man.

#### C H A P. XXXIV.

*Before we see Judah and Jerusalem ruined we shall yet see some glorious years, while good Josiah sits at the helm. By his pious endeavours for reformation God tried them yet once more; if they had known in this their day, the day of their visitation, the things that belonged to their peace and improved them, their ruin might have been prevented. But after this reign they were hid from their eyes, and the next reigns brought an utter desolation upon them. In this chapter we have (1.) A general account of Josiah's character, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His zeal to root out idolatry, ver. 3—7. (3.) His care to repair the temple, ver. 8—13. (4.) The finding of the book of the law, and the good use made of it, ver. 14—28. (5.) The publick reading of the law to the people, and their renewing their covenant with God thereupon, ver. 29—33. Much of this we had, 2 Kings xxii.*

1. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. 2. And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined *neither* to the right hand nor to the left. 3. ¶ For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. 4. And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images that *were* on high above them he cut down, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them

No. xxxii.

that had sacrificed unto them. 5. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. 6. And *so did he* in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about. 7. And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

Concerning Josiah, we are here told,

1. That he came to the crown when he was very young; but eight years old, yet his infancy did not debar him from his right, and reigned *thirty-one years*, ver. 1. a considerable time: but I doubt in the beginning of his reign, things went much as they had done in his father's time, because, being a child, he must leave the management of them to others; so that it was not till his twelfth year, which goes far in the number of his years, that the reformation began, ver. 3. he could not, as Hezekiah did, fall about it immediately.

2. That he reigned very well, ver. 2. approved himself to God, and trod in the steps of David, and did not decline either *to the right-hand or to the left*; for there are errors on both hands.

3. That while he was young, about sixteen years old, he *began to seek after God*, ver. 3. We have reason to think he had nothing so good an education as Manasseh had; it is well if those about him did not endeavour to corrupt and debauch him; yet he thus sought God when he was young. It is the duty and interest of young people, and will particularly be the honour of young gentlemen, as soon as they come to years of understanding, to *begin to seek God*; for they that seek him early shall find him.

4. That in his twelfth year (when, it is probable, he took the administration of the government entirely into his own hands) he *began to purge his kingdom from the remains of idolatry*; he destroyed the high-places, groves, images, altars, all the utensils of idolatry, ver. 3, 4. He not only cast them out as Manasseh did, but broke them to pieces and made dust of them. This destruction of idolatry is here said to be in his twelfth year, but it was said, 2 Kings xxiii. 23. to be in his eighteenth year; something was done towards it now in his twelfth year; then he began to purge out idolatry, but probably that good work met with opposition, so that it was not thoroughly done till they had found the book of the law six years after; but here the whole work is laid together briefly, which was much more largely and particularly related in the *Kings*. His zeal carried him out to do this not only in Judah, and Jerusalem, but in the cities of Israel too, as far as he had any influence upon them.

8. ¶ Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. 9. And when they came to Hilkiah the high-priest, they delivered the money *that was* brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and they returned to Jerusalem. 10. And they put it in the hand of the workmen, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD, to repair and mend the house. 11. Even to the artificers and builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12. And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them *were* Jahath, and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah, and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and *other* of the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of musick. 13. Also *they were* over the bearers of burdens, and *were* overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Levites, *there were* scribes, and officers, and porters.

Here 1. Orders are given by the king for the repair of the temple, ver. 8. when he had purged the house of the corruptions of it, he began to fit it up for the services that were to be performed in it. Thus we must do by the spiritual temple of the heart; get it cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and then renewed, so as to be transformed into the image of God. Josiah in this order calls God the Lord his God; they that truly love God will *love the habitation of his house*.

2. Care is taken about it; effectual care; the Levites went about the country and gathered money towards it, which was returned



turned to the three trustees mentioned; *ver.* 8. they brought it to Hilkiash the high-priest, *ver.* 9. and he and they put it into the hands of workmen, both over-seers and labourers, who undertook to do it by the great, as we say, or *in the gross*, *ver.* 10, 11. It is observed that the workmen were industrious and honest, they *did the work faithfully*, *ver.* 12. and work-men are not compleatly faithful; if they are not both careful and diligent, for a confidence is reposed in them that they will be so. Also that the over-seers were ingenious; for it is said all those were employed to inspect this work that could skill of instruments of musick; not that their skill in musick would be of any use in architecture, but it was an evidence that they were men of sense and ingenuity, and particularly that their genius lay towards the mathematics, which qualified them very much for this trust. Witty men are then wise men when they employ their wit in doing good, in helping their friends, and as they have opportunity of serving the publick. Observe in this work how God dispenseth his gifts variously; here were some that were *bearers of burthens*, cut out for bodily labour, and fit to work. Here were others (made *meliori luto*) that had skill in musick, and they were *overseers of them that laboured*, and scribes and officers; the former were the hands, these were the heads, they had need of one another, and the work needed both. Let not the overseers of the work despise the bearers of burthens, nor let them that work in the service grudge at those whose office is to direct, but let each esteem and serve the other in love, and God have the glory, and the church the benefit of the different gifts and dispositions of both.

14. ¶ And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiash the priest found the book of the law of the LORD given by Moses. 15. And Hilkiash answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiash delivered the book to Shaphan: 16. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it. 17. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. 18. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiash the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. 19. And it came to pass when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. 20. And the king commanded Hilkiash, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Afsaiah a servant of the kings, saying, 21. Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel, and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. 22. And Hilkiash, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem, in the college) and they spake to her to that effect. 23. ¶ And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, 24. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: 25. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. 26. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard, 27. Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thy self before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thy self before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. 28. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

This whole paragraph we had just as it is here related, 2 Kings xxii. 8—20. and have nothing to add here to what was there observed.

But, 1. We may from hence take occasion to bless God that we have plenty of Bibles, and they are or may be in all hands; that the book of the law and gospel is not lost, is not scarce; that in this sense the word of the Lord is not precious, Bibles are jewels, but thanks be to God they are not rarities: the fountain of the waters of life is not a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, but the streams of it in all places make glad the city of our God: *Ufus communis aquarum*. What a great deal shall we have to answer for if the great things of God's law being thus made common, should be accounted by us as strange things?

2. We may from hence learn whenever we read or hear the word of God, to affect our hearts with it, and to get them possessed with a holy fear of that wrath of God which is there revealed against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, as Josiah's tender heart was. When he heard the words of the law, he *rent his clothes*, *ver.* 19. and God was greatly well pleased with his doing so, *ver.* 27. Were the things contained in the scripture new to us, as they were here to Josiah, surely they would make deeper impressions upon us than commonly they do; but they are never the less weighty, and therefore should not be the less considered by us for their being well-known. Rent the heart therefore; not the garments.

3. We are here directed when we are under convictions of sin, and apprehensions of divine wrath, to enquire of the Lord; so Josiah did, *ver.* 21. It concerns us to ask as they did, *Acts* ii. 37. *Men and brethren what shall we do!* and more particularly, as the jayler, saying, *what must I do to be saved?* *Acts* xvi. 30. *If ye will thus enquire, enquire ye*, *Isa.* xxi. 12. and blessed be God we have the lively oracles to which to apply ourselves with these enquiries.

4. We are here warned of the ruin that sin brings upon nations and kingdoms. They that forsake God bring evil upon themselves, (*ver.* 24, 25.) and kindle a fire which shall not be quenched, such will the fire of God's wrath be when, the decree is gone forth against those that obstinately, and impenitently, persist in their wicked ways.

5. We are here encouraged to humble our selves before God; and seek unto him, as Josiah did: if we cannot prevail thereby to turn away God's wrath from our land, yet we shall deliver our own souls, *ver.* 27, 28. And good people are here taught to be so far from fearing death, as to welcome it rather when it takes them away from the evil to come. See how the property of it is altered by making it the matter of a promise: *Thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace*; housed in that ark, as Noah, when a deluge is coming.

29. ¶ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and the Levites, and all the people great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant, that was found in the house of the LORD. 31. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. 32. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

We have here an account of the further advances which Josiah made towards the reformation of his kingdom, upon the hearing of the law read, and the receipt of the message God sent him by the prophetess. Happy the people that had such a king: for here we find,

1. That they were well-taught. He did not go about to force them to their duty, till he had first instructed them in it. He called all the people together, great and small, young and old, rich and poor, high and low; *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear* the words of the book of the covenant; for they are all concerned in those words: To put an honour upon the service, and to engage attention the more, tho' there were priests and Levites present, the king himself read the book to the people, *ver.* 30. and he read it, no doubt, in such a manner, as to shew that he was himself affected with it, which would be a means to affect the hearers.

2. That



2. That they were well fixed. The articles of agreement between God and Israel, being read, that they might intelligently covenant with God, both king and people here with great solemnity do as it were subscribe the articles: The king in his place covenanted to keep God's commandments with all his heart and soul, according to what was *written in the book*, ver. 31. and urged the people to declare their consent likewise to this covenant, and solemnly to promise, that they would faithfully perform, fulfil, and keep all, and every thing that was on their part to be done, according to this covenant: Which they did; they could not for shame do otherwise. He caused *all that were present* to stand to it, ver. 32. and made them *all to serve*, even to serve the Lord their God, ver. 33. To do it, and to make a business of it; he did all he could to bring them to it; to serve, even to serve; the repetition notes, that that was the only thing his heart was on; he aimed at nothing else, in what he did, but to engage them to God and their duty.

3. That they were well tended; were honest with good looking to. *All his days they departed not from following the Lord*; he kept them with much ado, from running into idolatry again: *All his days*, were days of restraint upon them; but this intimated, that there was in them a bent to backslide, a strong inclination to idolatry; many of them wanted nothing but to have him out of the way, and then they would have their high-places and their images up again. And therefore we find, that in the days of Josiah, Jer. iii. 6. God charged it upon treacherous Judah, that she had not returned to him with all her heart, but feignedly, ver. 10. nay, had played the harlot, ver. 8. and thereby had even justified backsliding Israel, ver. 11. And in the twenty-third year of this reign, four or five years after this, that they had gone on to provoke God to anger with the works of their hands, Jer. xxv. 3—7. And, which is very observable, it is from the beginning of Josiah's reformation, his twelfth or thirteenth year, that the iniquity of the house of Judah, which brought ruin upon them, and which the prophet was to bear lying on his right side, was dated, Ezek. iv. 6. For from thence to the destruction of Jerusalem, was just forty years. Josiah was sincere in what he did, but the generality of the people were averse to it, and hankered after their idols still; so that the reformation, tho' well designed, and well prosecuted by the prince, had little or no effect upon the people. It was with reluctancy that they parted with their idols; still they were in heart joined to them, and wished for them again: This God saw, and therefore from that time, when one would have thought the foundations had been laid for a perpetual security and peace, I say, from that very time did the decree go forth for their destruction. Nothing hastens the ruin of a people, nor ripens them for it more than the baffling of hopeful attempts for reformation, and an hypocritical return to God. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

## CHAP. XXXV.

*We are here to attend Josiah (1.) To the temple, where we see his religious care for the due observance of the ordinance of the passover, according to the law, ver. 1—19. (2.) To the field of battle, where we see his rashness, in engaging with the king of Egypt, and how dear it cost him, ver. 20—23. (3.) To the grave, where we see him bitterly lamented, ver. 24—27. And so we must take our leave of Josiah.*

1. **M**OREOVER, Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2. And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD. 3. And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel. 4. And prepare your selves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son. 5. And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and after the division of the families of the Levites. 6. So kill the passover and sanctify your selves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD, by the hand of Moses. 7. And Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover-offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these were of the king's substance. 8. And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests and to the Levites: Hilkiah and Zechariah, and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover-

offerings, two thousand and six hundred small cattle, and three hundred oxen. 9. Conaniah also, and Shemaiah, and Nethaneel, his brethren, and Heshabiah, and Jehiel, and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave unto the Levites for passover-offerings, five thousand small cattle, and five hundred oxen. 10. So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment. 11. And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled the blood from their hands, and the Levites flayed them. 12. And they removed the burnt-offerings, that they might give according to the divisions of the families of the people, to offer unto the LORD as it is written in the book of Moses: and so did they with the oxen. 13. And they roasted the passover with fire, according to the ordinance: but the other holy offerings sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and divided them speedily among all the people. 14. And afterward they made ready for themselves, and for the priests: because the priests the sons of Aaron were busied in offering of burnt-offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests the sons of Aaron. 15. And the singers the sons of Asaph, were in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the porters waited at every gate; they might not depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them. 16. So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt-offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according to the commandment of king Josiah. 17. And the children of Israel that were present, kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. 18. And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet, neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 19. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, was this passover kept.

The destruction which Josiah made of idols and idolatry was more largely related in the Kings, and but just mentioned here in the foregoing chapter; ver. 33. But his solemnizing of the passover, which was but touched upon there, 2 Kings xxiii. 21: is very particularly related here. Many were the feasts of the Lord, appointed by the ceremonial law, but the passover was the chief; it began them all in the night, that Israel came out of Egypt. It concluded them all in the night wherein Christ was betrayed; and in the celebration of it Hezekiah and Josiah, those two great reformers, revived religion in their day. The ordinance of the Lord's supper is now nearest a kin to that of any of the Jewish festivals; and the due observance of that ordinance, according to the rule, is an instance and means both of the growing purity and beauty of churches, and of the growing piety and devotion of particular Christians. Religion cannot flourish where that passover is either wholly neglected or not duly observed; return to that, revive that, make a solemn business of that affecting binding ordinance, and then, it is to be hoped, there will be a reformation in other instances also.

In the account we had of Hezekiah's passover, the great zeal of the people was observable, and the transport of devout affection that they were in; but little of that appears here. It was more in compliance with the king that they all kept the passover, ver. 17, 18. than from any great inclination they had to it themselves. Some pride they took in this form of godliness, but little pleasure in the power of it. But whatever defect there was among the people in the inside of the duty, both the magistrates and the ministers did their part, and took care that the external part of the service should be performed with a due decorum.

1. The king exhorted and directed, quickened and encouraged, the priests and Levites to do their office in this solemnity. Perhaps, he saw them remiss and indifferent, unwilling to go out of their road, or mend their pace; if ministers are so, it is not amiss for any, but most proper for magistrates, to stir them up to their business. Say to Archippus, *Take heed to thy ministry*, Col. iv. 17. Let us see how this good king managed his clergy upon this occasion.

1. He reduced them to the office they were appointed to by the law of Moses, ver. 6. and the order they were put into by David and Solomon, ver. 4. He set them in their charge, ver. 2. did not cut them out new work, nor put them into any new method, but called them back to their institution. Their courses were settled in writing, let them have recourse to that writing, and marshal themselves according to the divisions of their families, ver. 5. Our rule



rule is settled in the written word ; let magistrates take care that ministers walk according to that rule, and they do their duty.

2. He ordered the ark to be put in its place, which it should seem had of late been displaced, either by the wicked kings, to make room for their idols in the most holy place, or by Hezekiah to make room for the workmen that repaired the temple ; however it was, Josiah bids the *Levites put the holy ark in the house*, ver. 3. and not carry it about from place to place, as perhaps of late they had done, justifying themselves therein by the practice before the temple was built. Now the priests were discharged from this burthen of the ark, they must be careful in other services about it.

3. He charged them to *serve God and his people Israel*, ver. 3. Ministers must look upon themselves as servants both to Christ and to his church for his sake, *2 Cor. iv. 5.* They must take care, and take pains, and lay out themselves to the utmost, (1.) For the glory and honour of God, and to advance the interests of his kingdom among men. Paul, *a servant to God*, Tit. i. 1. (2.) For the welfare and benefit of his people, not as having dominion over their faith, but as servants of their holiness and joy ; and it will be no difficulty in the strength of God honestly to serve these two masters.

4. He charged them to *sanctify themselves, and prepare their brethren*, ver. 6. Ministers work must begin at home, and they must sanctify themselves in the first place, purify themselves from sin, sequester themselves from the world, and devote themselves to God, but it must not end there, they must do what they can to *prepare their brethren* by admonishing, instructing, exhorting, quickning, and comforting them. *The preparation of the heart is indeed from the Lord ;* but ministers must be instruments in his hand.

5. He encouraged them to the service, ver. 2. He spoke comfortably to them, as Hezekiah did, chap. xxx. 22. He promised them his countenance. Note, Those whom we charge, we should encourage. Most people love to be spoken fair, and will be wrought upon by encouragements more than by threats.

2. The king and the princes (influenced by his example) gave liberally for the bearing of the charges of this passover. The ceremonial services were expensive, which perhaps was one reason why they had been neglected : People had not zeal enough to be at the charge of them ; nor were they now very fond of them for that reason. And therefore,

(1.) Josiah, at his own proper cost, furnished the congregation with paschal lambs, and other sacrifices to be offered during the seven days of the feast. He allowed out of his own estate, *thirty thousand lambs for passover-offerings ;* which the offerers were to feast upon, and three thousand bullocks, ver. 7. to be offered during the following seven days. Note, Those who are serious in religion, when they persuade others to that which is good, should make it as cheap and easy to them as may be. And where God sows plentifully, he expects to reap accordingly ; it is to be feared the congregation generally had not come provided ; so that if Josiah had not furnished them, the work of God must have stood still.

(2.) The chief of the priests, that were men of great estates, contributed towards the priests charges, as Josiah towards the peoples. *The princes*, ver. 8. *i. e.* the chief of the priests, the princes of the holy tribe, *rulers of the house of God*, bore the priests charges. And some of the rich and great men of the Levites, furnished them also with cattle both great and small for offerings, ver. 9. Those that sincerely desire to be found in the way of their duty, sometimes providence raiseth them up friends to bear them out in it, beyond what they could have expected.

3. The priests and Levites performed their office very readily, ver. 10. They killed the paschal lambs in the court of the temple, the priests sprinkled the blood upon the altar, the Levites flayed them, and then gave the flesh to the people according to their families, ver. 11, 12. not fewer than ten, nor more than twenty, to a lamb ; they took it to their several apartments, roasted it, and eat it *according to the ordinance*, ver. 13. As for the other sacrifices that were eucharistical, the flesh of them was boiled according to the law of the peace-offerings, and was *divided speedily among the people*, that they might feast upon it as a token of their joy in the atonement made, and their reconciliation to God thereby. And (lastly) the priests and Levites took care to honour God by *eating of the passover* themselves, ver. 14. Let not ministers think that the care they take for the souls of others, will excuse their neglect of their own ; or that being employed so much in publick worship will supersede the religious exercises of their closets and families : The Levites here *made ready for themselves and for the priests*, because the priests were wholly taken up all day in the service of the altar, therefore that they might not have their lamb to dress when they should eat it, the Levites got it ready for them against supper-time. Let ministers learn hence to help one another, and to forward one another's work, as brethren, and fellow-servants of the same master.

4. The singers and porters attended in their places, and did their office, ver. 15. The singers with their sacred songs and musick expressed and excited the joy of the congregation, and made the service very pleasant to them ; and the porters at the gates took care that there should be no breaking in of any thing,

to defile or disquiet the assembly, nor going out of any from it, that none should steal away till the service was done : And while they were thus employed their brethren the Levites prepared paschal lambs for them.

5. The whole solemnity was performed with great exactness according to the law, ver. 16, 17. and upon that account there was none like it since Samuel's time, ver. 18. for in Hezekiah's passover there were several irregularities. And bishop Patrick observes, that in this also it exceeded the other passover, which the preceding kings had kept ; that tho' Josiah was nothing so rich as David and Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, yet he furnished the whole congregation with beasts for sacrifice, both paschal and eucharistical, at his own proper cost and charge, which was more than any king ever did before him.

20 ¶ After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates : and Josiah went out against him. 21. But he sent embassadours to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah ? *I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war : for God commanded me to make haste, forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not* 22. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself that he might fight with him, and hearkned not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. 23. And the archers shot at king Josiah ; and the king said to his servants, Have me away, for I am sore wounded. 24. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in *one of the sepulchres of his fathers* : and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25. ¶ And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all the singing-men, and the singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel : and behold, they *are written in the lamentations*. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness according to *that which was written in the law of the LORD*, 27. And his deeds first and last, behold, they *are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah*.

It was thirteen years from Josiah's famous passover to his death ; during which time, we may hope things went well in his kingdom ; that he prospered, and religion flourished ; yet we are not entertained with the pleasing account of those years, but they are passed over in silence, because the people for all this were not turned from the love of their sins, nor God from the fierceness of his anger : The next news therefore we hear of Josiah, is, that he is cut off in the midst of his days and usefulness, before he is full forty years old. We had this sad story, *2 Kings xxiii. 29, 30.* here it is somewhat more largely related : That appears here more than did there, which reflects with such blame on Josiah, and such praise on the people, as one would not have expected.

1. Josiah was a very good prince, yet he is much to be blamed for his rashness and presumption in going out to war against the king of Egypt, without cause or call. It was bad enough as it appeared in the *Kings*, that he meddled with strife which belonged not to him. But here it looks worse ; for it seems the king of Egypt sent ambassadors to him to warn him against this enterprize, ver. 21. He argues (1.) From principles of justice : The king of Egypt professeth he had no design to do him any hurt, and therefore it was unfair, against common equity, and the law of nations, for Josiah to take up arms against him. If even a *righteous man engage in an unrighteous cause*, let him not expect to prosper, *God is no respecter of persons*. See *Prov. iii. 30.*—xxv. 8. (2.) From principles of religion. *God is with me ;* nay, *He commanded me to make haste*, and therefore if thou retard my motions, thou *meddlest with God*. It cannot be that the king of Egypt only pretended this, as Sennacherib did in a like case, *2 Kings xviii. 25*, hoping thereby to make Josiah desist, because he knew he had a veneration for the word of God ; for it is said here, ver. 22. That the words of Necho were *from the mouth of God* ; we must therefore suppose that either by a dream, or by a strong impulse upon his spirit, which he had reason to think was from God, or by Jeremiah, or some other prophet, he had ordered him to make war upon the king of Assyria. (3.) From principles of policy. *That he destroy thee not ;* it is at thy peril, if thou engage against one that has both a better army, and a better cause, and God on his side.

It was not in wrath to Josiah, whose heart was upright with the Lord his God, but in wrath to an hypocritical nation, who were unworthy of so good a king, that he was so far infatuated as not to hearken to those fair reasonings, and desist from his enterprize. He *would not turn his face from him*, but went in person and fought the Egyptian army in the *valley of Megiddo*, ver. 22.



If perhaps he could not believe that the king of Egypt had a command from God to do what he did, yet upon his pleading such a command, he ought to have consulted the oracles of God before he had gone out against him. His not doing that was his great fault, and of fatal consequence. In this matter he walked not in the ways of David, his father; for had it been his case, he would have enquired of the Lord, *Shall I go up? Wilt thou deliver them into my hands?* How can we think to prosper in our ways, if we do not acknowledge God in them?

2. The people were a very wicked people, yet they are much to be praised for lamenting the death of Josiah as they did. That Jeremiah lamented him, I do not wonder; he was the weeping prophet, and plainly foresaw the utter ruin of his country following upon the death of this good king: But it is strange to find that all Judah and Jerusalem, that stupid senseless people, *mourned for him*, ver. 24. contrived how to have their mourning excited by singing-men and singing-women; how to have it spread through the kingdom, they made an ordinance in Israel, that the mournful ditties penned on this sad occasion, should be learned and sung by all sorts of people. And, lastly, how to have the remembrance of it perpetuated, these elegies were inserted in the collections of State-Poems, they are written in the Lamentations. Hereby it appeared, (1.) That they had some respect to their good prince, and tho' they did not cordially comply with him in all his good designs, yet they could not but have a great honour for him. Pious useful men will be manifested in the consciences even of those that will not be influenced by their example; and many that will not submit to the rules of serious godliness themselves, yet cannot but give it their good word; and esteem it in others. Perhaps those lamented Josiah when he was dead, that were not thankful to God for him while he lived. The Israelites murmured at Moses and Aaron while they were with them; and spake sometimes of stoning them, and yet when they died they mourned for them many days: We are often taught to value mercies by the loss of them, which when we enjoyed we did not prize as we ought. (2.) That they had some sense of their own danger, now he was gone. Jeremiah told them, it is likely, of the evil they must now expect would come upon them, from which he was taken away; and so far they credited what he said, that they lamented the death of him that was their defence. Note, Many will easier be persuaded to lament the miseries that are coming upon them, than to take the proper way by universal reformation to prevent them; will shed tears for their troubles, but will not be prevailed upon to part with their sins. But godly sorrow worketh repentance, and that repentance will be to salvation.

C H A P. XXXVI.

*We have here (1.) A short but sad account of the bitter ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, within a few years after Josiah's death. (1.) The history of it in the unhappy reigns of Jehoahaz for three months, ver. 1—4. Jehoiakim, ver. 5—8. for eleven years; Jehoiachin three months, ver. 9, 10. and Zedekiah, eleven years, ver. 11. Additions were made to the national guilt, and advances towards the national destruction in each of those reigns; which at length was completed, in the slaughter of multitudes, ver. 17. the plundering and burning of the temple, and all the palaces, the desolation of the city, ver. 18, 19. And the captivity of the people that remained, ver. 20. (2.) Some remarks upon it; that herein sin was punished, Zedekiah's wickedness, ver. 12, 13. The idolatry the people were guilty of, ver. 14. and abuse of God's prophets, ver. 15, 16. The word of God was herein fulfilled, ver. 21. (2.) The dawning of the day of their deliverance in Cyrus's proclamation, ver. 22, 23.*

1. **T**HEN the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem. 2. Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. 3. And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and condemned the land in an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. 4. And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt. 5. ¶ Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD his God. 6. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon. 7. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. 8. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and

No. xxxii.

*that which was found in him*, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. 9. ¶ Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD. 10. And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

The destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here coming on by degrees. God so ordered it to shew that he has no pleasure in sinners ruin, but had rather they would turn and live, and therefore gives them both time and inducement to repent, and waits to be gracious. The history of these reigns was more largely recorded in the three last chapters of the second of Kings.

1. Jehoahaz was set up by the people, ver. 1. but in one quarter of a year was deposed, by Pharaoh-necho, and carried a prisoner to Egypt, and the land fined for setting him up, ver. 2, 3, 4. Of this young-prince we hear no more; had he trod in the steps of his father's piety, he might have reigned long and prospered, but we are told in the Kings that *he did evil in the sight of the Lord*, and therefore his triumphing was short, and his joy but for a moment.

2. Jehoiakim was set up by the king of Egypt, and reigned eleven years. How low was Judah brought when the king of Egypt, an old enemy to their land, gave what king he pleased to the kingdom, and what name he pleased to the king, ver. 4. He made Eliakim king, and called him Jehoiakim in token of his authority over him. He did *that which was evil*, ver. 5. nay, we read of the *abominations which he did*, ver. 8. he was very vile and wicked; idolatries generally go under the name of abominations. We hear no more of the king of Egypt, but the king of Babylon came up against him, ver. 7. seized him, and bound him with a design to carry him to Babylon; but it seems he either changed his mind and suffered him to reign as his vassal, or death released the prisoner before he was carried away: However the best and most valuable vessels of the temple were now carried away, and made use of in Nebuchadnezzar's temple in Babylon, ver. 6. for we may suppose no temple in the world was so richly furnished as that of Jerusalem. The sin of Judah was, that they had brought the idols of the heathen into God's temple; and now their punishment was, that the vessels of the temple were carried away unto the service of the gods of the nations. If men will profane God's institutions by their sins, it is just with God to suffer them to be profaned by their enemies. These were the vessels which the false prophets flattered the people with hopes of the return of, Jer. xxvii. 16. but Jeremiah told them, the rest should go after them, ver. 22. and they did so. But as the carrying away of these vessels to Babylon began the calamity of Jerusalem, so Belshazzar's daring profanation of them there, filled the measure of the iniquity of Babylon; for when he drunk wine in them to the honour of his gods, the hand-writing on the wall presented him with his doom, Dan. v. 3. In the reference to the book of the Kings concerning this Jehoiakim, mention is made of *that which was found in him*, ver. 8. which seems to be meant of the treachery that was found in him towards the king of Babylon; but some of the Jewish writers understand it of certain private marks, or signatures, found in his dead body in honour of his idol; such cuttings as God had forbidden, Lev. xix. 28.

3. Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, attempted to reign in his stead, and reigned long enough to shew his evil inclination; but after three months and ten days, the king of Babylon sent and fetched him away captive, with more of the goodly vessels of the temple. He is said here to be eight years old, but in Kings he is said to be eighteen when he began to reign, so that this seems to be a mistake of the transcriber, unless we suppose that his father took him at eight years old to join with him in the government, as some think.

11. ¶ Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12. And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the LORD. 13. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God, but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. 14. ¶ Moreover, all the chief of the priests, and the people transgressed very much, after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion,



passion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: 16. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy. 17. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword, in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave *them* all into his hand. 18. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all *these* he brought to Babylon. 19. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20. And them that had escaped from the sword, carried he away to Babylon: where they were servants to him and his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia; 21. To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: *for* as long as she lay desolate, she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

We have here an account of the destruction of the kingdom of Judah, and the city of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Abraham, God's friend, was called out of that country, from Ur of the Chaldees, when God took him into covenant and communion with himself, and now his degenerate seed were carried into that country again, to signify that they had forfeited all that kindness wherewith they had been loved for the father's sake, and the benefit of that covenant into which he was called; all was now undone again.

Here is, 1. The sins that brought this desolation.

(1.) Zedekiah the king, in whose days it came, brought it upon himself by his own folly. For he carried himself very ill both towards God, and towards the king of Babylon. 1. If he had but made God his friend, that would have prevented the ruin. Jeremiah brought him messages from God, which if he had given due regard to, it might have been a lengthning of his tranquillity; but it is here charged upon him, that he *humiliated not himself before Jeremiah*, ver. 12. It was expected that this mighty prince, as big as he was, should humble himself before a poor prophet, when *he spake from the mouth of the Lord*, should submit to his admonitions, and be amended by them; to his counsels, and be ruled by them; should lay himself under the commanding power of the word of God in his mouth; and because he would not thus make himself a servant to God, he is made a slave to his enemies. They that will not humble themselves, God will find some way or other to humble them. Jeremiah as a prophet was set *over the nations and kingdoms*, Jer. i. 10. and as mean a figure as he made, whoever would not humble themselves before him it was at their peril. 2. If he had but been true to his covenant with the king of Babylon, that would have prevented his ruin; but he *rebelled against him*, tho' he had sworn to be his faithful tributary, and perfidiously violated his engagements to him, ver. 13. This was it that provoked the king of Babylon to deal so severely with him as he did. All nations looked upon an oath as a sacred thing, and those that durst break through the obligations of it as the worst of men, abandoned of God, and to be abhorred by all mankind: if therefore Zedekiah falsify his oath, *when lo, he has given his hand, he shall not escape*, Ezek. xvii. 18. Tho' Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen, an enemy, yet if having sworn to him he be false to him, he shall know *there is a God to whom vengeance belongs*. The thing that ruined Zedekiah was not only that he *turned not to the Lord God of Israel*, but that he *stiffened his neck*, and *hardened his heart from turning to him*, i. e. he was obstinately resolved not to return to him, would not lay his neck under God's yoke, nor his heart under the impressions of his word, and so in effect he *would not be healed, he would not live*.

(2.) The great sin that brought this destruction was idolatry; the priests and people went after *the abominations of the heathen*, forsook the pure worship of God for the lewd and filthy rites of the Pagan superstition, and so *polluted the house of the Lord*, ver. 14. The priests, the chief of the priests, that should have opposed idolatry, were ring-leaders in it. That place is not far from ruin, in which religion is already ruined.

(3.) The great aggravation of their sin, and that which filled the measure of it, was the abuse they gave to God's prophets who were sent to call them to repentance, ver. 15, 16. Where we have,

1. God's tender compassion towards them in sending prophets to them. Because he was the *God of their fathers*, in covenant with them, and whom they worshipped; tho' this degenerate rate forsook him, therefore he *sent to them by his messengers* to convince them of their sin, and warn them of the ruin they would bring upon themselves by it; "rising up betimes and sending," which notes not only that he did it with the greatest care and concern

imaginable, as men rise betimes to set their servants on work, when their heart is upon their business; but that upon their first deviation from God to idols, if they took but one step that way, God presently sent to them by his messengers to reprove them for it: he gave them early, timely notice both of their duty and danger. Let this quicken us to seek God early, that he riseth betimes to send to us. The prophets that were sent, rose betimes to speak to them, were diligent and faithful in their office, lost no time, slipped no opportunity of dealing with them, and therefore God is said to rise betimes. The more pains ministers take in their work, the more will the people have to answer for, if it be all in vain. The reason given, why God by his prophets did thus strive with them, is, because *he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place*, and would by these means have prevented their ruin. Note, The methods God takes to reclaim sinners, by his word, by ministers, by conscience, by providences, are all instances of his compassion towards them, and his unwillingness that any should perish.

2. Their base and disingenuous carriage towards God, ver. 16. *they mocked the messengers of God*, which was a high affront to him that sent them, despised his words in their mouths; and not only so, but mis-used the prophets, treated them as their enemies. The ill usage they gave Jeremiah, who lived at this time, and which we read much of in the book of his prophecy, is an instance of this. This was an evidence of an implacable enmity to God, and an invincible resolution to go on in their sins. This brought wrath upon them without remedy, for it was sinning against the remedy. Nothing is more provoking to God, than abuses given to his faithful ministers; for what is done against them, he takes as done against himself. *Saul; Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Persecution was the sin that brought upon Jerusalem its final destruction by the Romans. See *Matth. xxiii. 34—37*. Those that mock at God's faithful ministers, and do all they can to render them despicable or odious, that vex and mis-use them; to discourage them, and to keep others from hearkening to them; let them know that a wrong done to an ambassador is construed as done to the prince that sends him, and the day is coming, when they will find it had been better for them, they had been thrown *into the sea* with a mill-stone about their necks; for hell is deeper, and more dreadful.

3. The desolation itself, and some few of the particulars of it; which we had more largely, 2 *Kings xxv*.

1. Multitudes were put to the sword, even *in the house of their sanctuary*, ver. 17. whither they fled for refuge, hoping the holiness of the place would be their protection: but how could they expect to find it so, when they themselves had polluted it with their abominations, ver. 14. Those that cast off the dominion of their religion, forfeit all the benefit and comfort of it. The Chaldeans not only paid no reverence to the sanctuary, but shewed no natural pity either to the tender sex, or to the venerable age. They forsook God, who had compassion on them, ver. 15. and would have none of him; justly therefore are they given up into the hands of cruel men, that had no compassion on young man or maiden.

2. All the remaining vessels of the temple, great and small, and all the treasures, sacred and secular, the treasures of God's house, and of the king and his princes, were seized, and brought to Babylon, ver. 18.

3. The temple was burnt, the walls of Jerusalem demolished, the houses (called here the palaces, as *Psal. xlviii. 3*. so stately, rich and sumptuous were they) laid in ashes, and all the furniture called here, *the goodly vessels thereof*, destroyed, ver. 19. Let us see here what woful havock sin makes, and as we tender the comfort and continuance of our estates, keep that worm from the root of them.

4. The remainder of the people that escaped the sword, were carried captives to Babylon, ver. 20. impoverished, enslaved, insulted, and exposed to all the miseries, not only of a strange and barbarous land, but of an enemy's land, where those that hated them, bare rule over them. They were servants to those Monarchs, and no doubt were ruled with rigour as long as that monarchy lasted. Now they sat down by the rivers of Babylon with the streams of which they mingled their tears, *Psal. cxxxvii. 1*. And tho' there it should seem they were cured of idolatry; yet, as appears by the prophet Ezekiel, they were not cured of mocking the prophets.

5. The land lay desolate while they were captives in Babylon, ver. 21. That fruitful land, the glory of all lands, was now turned into a desert, not tilled nor husbanded. The pastures not clothed as they used to be with flocks, nor the vallies with corn, but it lay neglected. Now this may be considered, (1.) As the just punishment of their former abuse of it. They had served Baal with its fruits, *cursed therefore is the ground for their sakes*: Now the land *enjoyed her sabbaths*, ver. 21. as God had threatened by Moses, *Lev. xxvi. 34*. and the reason there given, ver. 35. is because *it did not rest on your sabbaths*, you profaned the sabbath-day, did not observe the sabbatical year. They many a time ploughed and sowed their land in the seventh year when it should have rested, and now it laid unploughed and unsown for ten times seven years. Note, God will be no loser in his glory at long run by the disobedience of men: if the tribute be not paid, he



he will distrain and recover it, as he speaks *Hos. ii. 9.* If they would not let the land rest, God would make it rest whether they would or no. Some think they had neglected the observance of seventy sabbatical years in all, and just so many by way of reprimand the land now enjoyed; Or, if those neglected were fewer, it was fit the law should be satisfied with interest. We find one of the quarrels God had with them at this time was for not observing another law, which related to the seventh year, and that was the release of servants, see *Jer. xxxiv. 13, &c.* (2.) Yet we may consider it as giving some encouragement to their hopes, that they should in due time return to it again. Had others come and taken possession of it, they might have despaired of ever recovering it; but while it lay desolate, it did as it were lie waiting for them again, and refuse to acknowledge any other owners.

22. ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia (that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished) the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 23. Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me, and he hath charged me to

build him an house in Jerusalem which is in Judah: who is there among you of all his people? the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.

These two last verses of this book have a double respect.

1. They look back to the prophecy of Jeremiah, and shew how that was accomplished, *ver. 22.* God had by him promised the restoring of the captives, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem at the end of seventy years, and that time to favour Sion, that set time came at last. After a long and dark night the day-spring from on high visited them. God will be found true to every word he has spoken.

2. They look forward to the history of Ezra, which begins with the repetition of these two last verses. They are there the introduction to a pleasant story, here they are the conclusion of a very melancholy one; and so we learn from them, that tho' God's church be cast down, it is not cast off; tho' his people be corrected, they are not abandoned; tho' thrown into the furnace, yet not lost there, nor left there any longer than till the dross be separated. Tho' God contend long, he will not contend always. The Israel of God shall be fetched out of Babylon in due time, and even the dry bones made to live. It may be long first; but the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie; therefore tho' it tarry, wait for it.

*The end of the CHRONICLES.*





A N

## E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

## PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Of the BOOK of

## E Z R A.

*The Jewish church puts on quite another face in this book, from what it had appeared with; its state much better, and more pleasant than it was of late in Babylon, and yet far inferior to what it had been formerly. The dry bones here live again, but in the form of a servant; the yoke of their captivity is taken off, but the marks of it in their galled necks remain. Kings we hear no more of, the crown is fallen from their heads. Prophets they are blessed with, to direct them in their re-establishment, but after a while prophecy ceaseth among them, till the great Prophet appears, and his fore-runner. The history of this book is the accomplishment of Jeremiah's prophecy, concerning the return of the Jews out of Babylon, at the end of seventy years, and a type of the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Apocalypse, concerning the deliverance of the gospel church out of the New Testament Babylon. Ezra preserved the records of that great revolution, and transmitted them to the church in this book. His name signifies a helper; and so he was to that people. A particular account concerning him we shall meet with, chap. vii. where he himself enters upon the stage of action. The book gives us an account, (1.) Of the Jews return out of their captivity, chap. i. and ii. (2.) Of the building of the temple, the opposition it met with, and yet the perfecting of it at last, chap. iii.—vi. (3.) Of Ezra's coming to Jerusalem, chap. vii. and viii. (4.) Of the good service he did there, in obliging those that had married strange wives to put them away, chap. ix. and x. This beginning again of the Jewish nation was small, yet its latter end greatly increased.*

## C H A P. I.

*In this chapter we have, (1.) The proclamation which Cyrus, king of Persia, issued out for the release of all the Jews that he found captives in Babylon, and the building of their temple in Jerusalem, ver. 1—4. (2.) The return of many thereupon, ver. 5, 6. (3.) Orders given for the restoring of the vessels of the temple, ver. 7—11. And this is the dawning of the day of their deliverance.*

1. **N**OW in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, (that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled) the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2. Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (he is the God) which is in Jerusalem. 4. And whosoever remain-

eth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will-offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

It will be proper for us here to consider,

1. What was the state of the captive Jews in Babylon, it was upon many accounts very deplorable; they were under the power of those that hated them, had nothing they could call their own; they had no temple, no altar. If they sung psalms their enemies ridiculed them, and yet they had prophets among them, Ezekiel and Daniel, were kept distinct from the heathen, some of them were preferred at court, others had comfortable settlements in the country, and they were all born up with hope, that in due time they should return to their own land again, in expectation of which they preserved among them the distinction of their families, the knowledge of their religion, and an aversion to idolatry. 2. What was the state of the government, under which they were. Nebuchadnezzar carried many of them into captivity, in the first year of his reign, which was the fourth of Jehoiakim, he reigned forty-five years, his son, Evil-merodach twenty-three, and his grandson, Belshazzar three years, which make up the seventy years. So Dr Lightfoot. It is charged upon Nebuchadnezzar, that he opened not the house of his prisoners, Isa. xiv. 17. And if he had shewed mercy to the poor Jews, Daniel told him,



him, it would have been the *lengthning of his tranquillity*, Dan. iv. 27. But the measure of the sins of Babylon was at length full, and then destruction was brought upon them by Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian, which we read of, Dan. v. Darius, being old, left the government to Cyrus, and he was employed as the instrument of the Jews deliverance, which he gave order for, as soon as ever he was master of the kingdom of Babylon, either in contradiction to Nebuchadnezzar, whose family he had cut off, and because he took a pleasure in undoing what he had done; or in policy to recommend his new acquired dominion, as merciful and gentle; or, as some think, in a pious regard to the prophecy of Isaiah, which had been published, and well known above one hundred and fifty years before, where he was expressly named, as the man that should do this for God, and for whom God would do great things, Isa. xlv. 28, 45, &c. and which, perhaps, was shewed him by those about him. His name (some say) in the Persian language, signifies *the sun*, for he brought light and healing to the church of God, and was an eminent type of Christ, the *sun of righteousness*. Some say his name signifies a father, and Christ is the everlasting Father.

Now here we are told,

1. Whence this proclamation took its rise. *The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus*. Note, The hearts of kings are in the hand of the Lord, and, like the rivulets of water, he turneth them which way soever he will. It is said of Cyrus, that he knew not God, nor how to serve him, but God knew him, and how to serve himself by him, Isa. xlv. 4. God governs the world by his influence on the spirits of men, and whatever good is done at any time, it is God that stirs up the spirit to do it, puts thoughts into the mind, gives to the understanding to form a right judgment, and directs the will which way he pleaseth. Whatever good offices therefore are at any time done for the church of God, he must have the glory of them.

2. The reference it had to the prophecy of Jeremiah, by whom God had not only promised that they should return, but had fixed the time, which set time to favour Sion was now come. Seventy years were determined, Jer. xxv. 12.—xxix. 10. And he that kept the promise, made concerning Israel's deliverance out of Egypt to a day, Exod. xii. 41. doubtless was as punctual to this. What Cyrus now did, was long since said to be the *confirming of the word of God's servants*, Isa. xlv. 26. Jeremiah, while he lived was hated and despised, yet thus did providence honour him long after, that a mighty monarch shall act in pursuance of the word of the Lord by his mouth.

3. The date of this proclamation, it was in his first year, not the first of his reign over Persia, the kingdom he was born to, but the first of his reign over Babylon, the kingdom he had conquered. Those are much honoured, whose spirits are stirred up to begin with God, and to serve him in their first years.

4. The publication of it, both by word of mouth, he *caused a voice to pass throughout all his kingdom*, like a jubilee trumpet (a joyful sabbatical year after many melancholy ones) proclaiming liberty to the captives; and in black and white too, he put it in writing, that it might be the more satisfactory, and might be sent to those distant provinces where the ten tribes were scattered, in Assyria and Media, 2 Kings xvii. 6.

5. The purport of this proclamation of liberty. 1. The preamble shews the causes and considerations, him thereunto moving, ver. 2. It should seem, his mind was enlightened with the knowledge of Jehovah, for so he calls him, the God of Israel, as the only living and true God, the God of heaven, who is the sovereign Lord, and disposer of all the kingdoms of the earth; of him he saith, ver. 3. *He is the God, God alone, God above all*: tho' he had not known God by education, God made him so far to know him now, as that he did this service with an eye to him. He professeth that he doth it, (1.) In gratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon him. *The God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth*. This sounds a little vain-glorious, for there were many kingdoms of the earth which he had nothing to do with, but he means, that God had given him all that was given to Nebuchadnezzar, whose dominion, Daniel said, was *to the end of the earth*, Dan. iv. 22.—v. 19. Note, God is the fountain of power; the kingdoms of the earth are at his dispose: whatever share any have of them, they have it from him: and those whom God has entrusted with great power, and large possessions, should look upon themselves as obliged thereby to do much for him. (2.) In obedience to God. He hath *charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem*; probably by a dream, or vision of the night, confirmed by comparing with it the prophecy of Isaiah, where his doing it was foretold. Israel's disobedience to God's charge, which they were often told of, is aggravated by the obedience of this heathen king.

2. He gives free leave to all the Jews that were in his dominions to go up to Jerusalem, and to *build the temple of the Lord* there, ver. 3. His regard to God made him overlook, (1.) The secular interest of his government: it had been his policy to keep so great a number of serviceable men in his dominions, and seemed impolitick to let them go, and take root again in their own land, but piety is the best policy. (2.) The honour of the religion of his country. Why did he not order them to build a temple to the gods of Babylon or Persia? No, he believes the God of Israel

to be the God of heaven, and therefore obligeth his Israel to worship him only; let them *walk in the name of the Lord their God*.

3. He subjoins a brief for a collection to bear their charges that were poor, and not able to bear their own, ver. 4. Whosoever remaineth, because he has not wherewithal to bear his charges to Jerusalem, *let the men of his place help him*; some take it as an order to the king's officers to supply them out of his revenue, as chap. vi. 8. But it may mean a warrant to the captives, to ask and receive the alms, and charitable contributions of all the king's loving subjects. And we may suppose the Jews had carried themselves so well among their neighbours, that they would be as forward to accommodate them, because they loved them, as the Egyptians were, because they were weary of them. At least many would be kind to them, because they saw the government would take it well. Cyrus not only gave his good wishes with them that went, *their God be with them*, ver. 3. but took care also to furnish them with such things as they needed. He took it for granted, those among them that were of ability would offer their *free-will offering for the house of God*, to promote the rebuilding of it. But, besides that, he would have them supplied out of his kingdom. Well-willers to the temple should be well-doers for it.

5. ¶ Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised to go up, to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. 6. And all they that were about them, strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. 7. ¶ Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods: 8. Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbred them unto Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. 9. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, 10. Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 11. All the vessels of gold and of silver, were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity, that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

We are here told,

1. How Cyrus's proclamation succeeded with others.

(1.) He having given leave to the Jews to go up to Jerusalem, many of them went up accordingly, ver. 5. The leaders herein were the *chief of the fathers* of Judah and Benjamin, eminent and experienced men, from whom it might justly be expected, that as they were above their brethren in dignity, so they should go before them in duty. The priests and Levites were (as became them) with the first that set their faces again towards Sion. If any good work is to be done, let ministers lead in it. They that accompanied them were such as God had inclined to go up. The same God that had raised up the spirit of Cyrus to proclaim this liberty, raised up their spirits to take the benefit of it, for it was done, *not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, Zech. iv. 6. The temptation perhaps was strong to some of them to stay in Babylon, they had convenient settlements there, had contracted an acquaintance with the neighbours that was pleasing enough to them, and were ready to say, *it is good to be here*: the discouragements of their return were many and great, the journey long, their wives and children unfit for travel, their own land was to them a strange land, the road to it an unknown road; go up to Jerusalem? And what should they do there? It was all in ruins, and in the midst of enemies, to whom they should be an easy prey: many were wrought upon by these considerations to stay in Babylon, at least not to go with the first: but there were some that broke through these difficulties, ventured to break the ice, and feared not the lion in the way, the lion in the streets; and they were those whose spirits God raised. He, by his spirit and grace, filled them with a generous ambition of liberty, a gracious affection to their own land, and a desire of the free and publick exercise of their religion. Had God left them to themselves, and to the counsels of flesh and blood, they had staid in Babylon, but he put it into their hearts to set their faces Sionward, and as strangers to ask the way thither, (Jer. l. 5.) for they being a new generation, went out like their father Abraham, from this land of the Chaldees, not knowing whither they went, Heb. xi. 8. Note, whatever good we do, it is owing purely to the grace of God, and he raiseth up the spirits to the doing of it; *works in us both to will and to do*. Our spirits naturally incline to this earth, and to the things of it, if they move upwards in any good affections, or good actions, it is God that raiseth them.



The call and offer of the gospel is like Cyrus's proclamation, *deliverance is preached to the captives*; Luke iv. 18. Those that are bound under the unrighteous dominion of sin, and bound over to the righteous judgment of God, may be made free by Jesus Christ: whoever will, by repentance and faith, return to God; his duty to God, his happiness in God, Jesus Christ has opened the way for him, and let him go up, out of the slavery of sin into the *glorious liberty of the children of God*. The offer is general to all; Christ makes it in pursuance of the grant which the Father has made him of *all power both in heaven and in earth*, a much greater dominion than that given to Cyrus, *ver. 2.* and of the charge given him to *build God a house*, to set him up a church in the world, a kingdom among men. Many that hear this joyful sound, choose to sit still in Babylon, are in love with their sins, and will not venture upon the difficulties of a holy life; but some there are, that break through the discouragements, and resolve to *build the house of God*, to make heaven of their religion, whatever it cost them, and they are those *whose spirit God hath raised*, above the world and the flesh, and whom he has made *willing in the day of his power*, Psal. cx. 3. Thus will the heavenly Canaan be replenished, tho' many perish in Babylon; and the gospel offer will not be made in vain.

2. Cyrus having given order that their neighbours should help them, they did so, *ver. 6.* All they that were about them, furnished them with plate and goods, to bear the charges of their journey, and to help them in building, and furnishing both their own houses and God's. As the tabernacle was made of the spoils of Egypt, and the first temple built by the labours of the strangers, so the second by the contributions of the Chaldeans, all intimating the admission of the Gentiles into the church in due time. God can, where he pleases, incline the hearts of strangers to be kind to his people, and make those to strengthen their hands, that have weakened them, *the earth helped the woman*. Besides, what was *willingly offered* by the Jews themselves, who staid behind, from a principle of love to God and his house, much was offered, as one may say, unwillingly, by the Babylonians, who were influenced to do it, by a divine power on their minds, which they themselves could give no account of.

3. How this proclamation was seconded by Cyrus himself. To give proof of the sincerity of his affection to the house of God, he not only released the people of God, but restored the vessels of the temple, *ver. 7, 8.* Observe here, (1.) How careful providence was of the vessels of the temple, that they were not lost, melted down, or so mixed with other vessels, that they could not be known, but that they were all now forth coming: such care God has of the living *vessels of mercy, vessels of honour*, of whom it is said, *2 Tim. ii. 19, 20. The Lord knows them that are his*, and they shall *none of them perish*. (2.) That tho' they had been put into an idol's temple, and probably used in the service of idols, yet they were given back to be used for God. God will recover his own; and the spoil of the strong man armed, shall be converted to the use of the conqueror. (3.) That Judah had a prince, even in captivity. Shephbazzar, supposed to be the same with Zerubbabel, is here called prince of Judah; the Chaldeans called him Shephbazzar, which signifies joy in tribulation; but among his own people, he went by the name of Zerubbabel, a stranger in Babylon; so he looked upon himself, and that Jerusalem was his home, though, as Josephus saith, he was captain of the life-guard to the king of Babylon. He took care of the affairs of the Jews, and had some authority over them, probably since the death of Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, who made him his heir, he being of the house of David. (4.) That to him the sacred vessels were numbered out, *ver. 8.* And he took care for their safe conveyance to Jerusalem, *ver. 11.* It would encourage them to build the temple, that they had so much rich furniture ready to put in it when it was built. Tho' God's ordinances, like the vessels of the sanctuary, may be corrupted and profaned by the New Testament Babylon, they shall in due time be restored to their primitive use and intention, for not one jot or tittle of divine institution shall fall to the ground.

## CHAP. II.

That many returned out of Babylon upon Cyrus's proclamation, we were told in the foregoing chapter, we have here a catalogue of the several families that returned, *ver. 1.* (1.) The leaders, *ver. 2.* (2.) The people, *ver. 3—35.* (3.) The priests, Levites, and retainers to the temple, *ver. 36—63.* (4.) The sum total, with an account of their retinue, *ver. 64—67.* (5.) Their offerings to the service of the temple, *ver. 68—70.*

1. **N**OW these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; 2. Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel. 3. The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. 4. The children

of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 5. The children of Ara, seven hundred seventy and five. 6. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. 7. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 8. The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. 9. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. 10. The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. 11. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. 12. The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. 13. The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. 14. The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. 15. The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. 16. The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 17. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. 18. The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. 19. The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. 20. The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. 21. The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three. 22. The men of Netophah, fifty and six. 23. The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. 24. The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. 25. The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. 26. The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 27. The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. 28. The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. 29. The children of Nebo, fifty and two. 30. The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. 31. The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 32. The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 33. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. 34. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 35. The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.

We may observe here,

1. That an account was kept in writing of the families that came up out of captivity, and the numbers of each family, (1.) For their honour, as part of their recompence for their faith and courage, their confidence in God, and their affection to their own land, and to stir up others to imitate their good example. Those that honour God, he will thus honour. The names of all those Israelites indeed, that accept the offer of deliverance by Christ, shall be found to their honour in a more sacred record than this, even in the *Lamb's book of life*. (2.) For the benefit of posterity, that they might know from whom they descended, and to whom they were allied.

2. That they are called *children of the province*; Judah that had been an illustrious kingdom, to which other kingdoms had been made provinces subject to it, and dependent on it, now was it self made a province, to receive laws and commissions from the king of Persia, and to be accountable to him. See how sin diminisheth and debaseth a nation, which righteousness would exalt. But by thus being made servants, as the patriarchs being sojourners in their own country which was theirs by promise, they were minded of the *better country, that is the heavenly*, Heb. xi. 14. a *kingdom which cannot be moved*, or changed into a province.

3. That they are said to come *every one to this city*, i. e. the city appointed them, in which appointment an eye, no doubt, was had to their former settlement by Joshua, and to that as near as might be they returned, for it doth not appear, that any others, at least none that were able to oppose them, had possessed them in their absence.

4. That the leaders are first mentioned, *ver. 2.* Zerubbabel and Jeshua were their Moses and Aaron, the former their chief prince, the latter their chief priest. Nehemiah and Mordecai are mentioned here; some think not the same with the famous men we afterwards meet with of those names: probably they were the same; but afterwards returned to court for the service of their country.

5. Some of these several families are named from the persons that were their ancestors, others from the places in which they had formerly resided; as with us many surnames, are the proper names of persons, others of places.

6. Some little difference there is between the numbers of some of the families here, and in *Neb. vii.* where this catalogue is repeated, which might arise from this, that some, who had given in their names at first to come, afterwards drew back, said, *I go Sir, but went not*, which would lessen the number of the families they belonged to; others that declined at first *afterwards repented and went*, and so increased the number.

7. Here are two families, that are called the children of Elam, one *ver. 7.* another *ver. 31.* and which is strange the number of both is the same, one thousand two hundred fifty four.

8. The



8. The children of Adonikam, which signifies a high lord, were six hundred sixty six, just the *number of the beast*, Rev. xiii. 18. which is there said to be the number of a man, which Mr Hugh Broughton thinks has reference to this man.

9. The children of Bethlehem, (*ver. 21.*) were but one hundred twenty three, tho' it was David's city; for Bethlehem was *little among the thousands of Judah*, yet there must the Messiah arise, *Mic. v. 2.*

10. Anathoth had been a famous place in the tribe of Benjamin, and yet here it numbred but one hundred twenty eight, *ver. 23.* which is to be imputed to the divine curse, which the men of Anathoth brought upon themselves, by persecuting Jeremiah, who was of their city, *Jer. xi. 21, 23. there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth.* And see *Isa. x. 30. O poor Anathoth*, nothing brings ruin on a people sooner than persecution.

36. ¶ The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three.

37. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two.

38. The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 39. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

40. ¶ The Levites: the children of Jeshua, and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. 41. ¶ The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight.

42. ¶ The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, *in all*, an hundred thirty and nine.

43. ¶ The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth, 44. The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon,

45. The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, 46. The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmal, the children of Hanan,

47. The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, 48. The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam,

49. The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, 50. The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim, 51. The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,

52. The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 53. The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah,

54. The children of Nezhiah, the children of Hatipha, 55. ¶ The children of Solomons servants:

the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, 56. The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 57. The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami.

58. All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomons servants, *were* three hundred ninety and two. 59. And these *were* they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their fathers house, and their seed, whether they *were* of Israel: 60. The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. 61. ¶ And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai (which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name): 62. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 63. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.

64. ¶ The whole congregation together, *was* forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 65. Besides their servants and their maids, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and *there were*, among them two hundred singing-men and singing-women. 66. Their horses *were* seven hundred thirty and six: their mules two hundred forty and five: 67. Their camels, four hundred thirty and five: *their asses*, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. 68. ¶ And *some* of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: 69. They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work, threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests garments. 70. So the priests and the Levites, and *some* of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

71. ¶ Here is, 1. An account of the priests that returned, and they were a considerable number; about a tenth part of the whole company: for the whole were forty two thousand and odd, *ver. 64.* and four families of priests made up forty two hundred and odd, *ver. 36—39.* thus was the tenth God's part; a blessed decimation. Three of the fathers of the priests here named were heads of courses, 1 *Chron. xxiv. 7, 8, 14.* The fourth is Pashur, *ver. 38.* if these were of the posterity of that Pashur that abused Jeremiah, *Jer. xx. 1.* it is strange that so ill a man should have so good a seed, and so numerous.

2. Of the Levites, and I cannot but admire at the small number of them, for taking in both the singers and the porters, *ver. 40, 41, 42.* they did not make three hundred and fifty. Time

was, when the Levites were more forward to their duty than the priests, 2 *Chron. xxix. 34.* but they were not so now. If one place, one family, has the reputation for pious zeal now, another may have it another time. *The wind blows where it listeth*, and shifts its point.

3. Of the Nethinims, who it is supposed were the Gibeonites, given (so their name signifies) by Joshua first, *Josh. ix. 27.* and again by David, *Ezra viii. 20.* when Saul had expelled them, to be employed by the Levites in the work of God's house, as hewers of wood, and drawers of water; and with them of the children of Solomon's servants, whom he gave for the like use (whether they were Jews or Gentiles doth not appear) and who are here taken notice of among the retainers of the temple, and numbred with the Nethinims, *ver. 55, 58.* Note, It is an honour to belong to God's house, tho' in the meanest office there.

4. Of some that were looked upon as Israelites by birth, and others as priests, and yet could not make out a clear title to the honour.

1. There were some that could not prove themselves Israelites, *ver. 59, 60.* A considerable number, who presumed they were of the seed of Jacob, but could not produce their pedigrees, and yet would go up to Jerusalem, having an affection to the house and people of God; these shamed those who were true-born Israelites, and yet not to be called Israelites indeed; *came out of the waters of Judah*, *Isa. xlviii. 1.* but had lost the relish of those waters.

2. There were others that could not prove themselves priests, and yet were supposed to be of the seed of Aaron. What is not preserved in black and white, will in all likelihood be forgotten in a little time. Now we are here told, (1.) How they lost their evidence. One of their ancestors married a daughter of Barzillai; that great man whom we read of in David's time, was proud of an alliance to that honourable family, and preferring that before the dignity of his priesthood, would have his children called after Barzillai's family; and their pedigree preserved in the registers of that house, not of the house of Aaron, and so they lost it. In Babylon, there was nothing to be got by the priesthood, and therefore they cared not for being a-kin to it. Those who think their ministry, or their relation to ministers, a diminution or disparagement to them, forget who it was that said, *I magnify my office.* (2.) What they lost with it. It should not be taken for granted, when they could not produce their proofs, but they were, *as polluted, put from the priesthood.* Now the priests had recovered their rights, and had the altar to live upon again, they would gladly be looked upon as priests. But they had sold their birth-right, for the honour of being gentlemen, and therefore were justly degraded, and forbidden to *eat of the most holy things.* Note, Christ will be ashamed of those that are ashamed of him and his service.

It was the Tirshatha, or governor, that put them under this sequestration, which some understand of Zerubbabel, the present governor, others of Nehemiah, who is so called, *Neh. viii. 9.—x. 1.* and gave this order when he came some years after. But the prohibition was not absolute, it was only a suspension, till there should be a high-priest with Urim and Thummim, by whom they might know God's mind in this matter. This, it seems, was expected and desired, that it doth not appear, that ever they were blessed with it under the second temple. They had the canon of the Old Testament compleat, which was better than Urim; and by the want of that oracle, were taught to expect the Messiah the great oracle, which the Urim and Thummim was but a type of. Nor doth it appear, that the second temple had the ark in it, either the old one, or a new one; those shadows by degrees vanished, as the substance approached; and God, who by the prophet intimates to his people, that they should sustain no damage by the want of the ark, *Jer. iii. 16. In those days, when they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, they shall say no more the ark of the covenant of the Lord, neither shall it come to mind, for they shall do well enough without it.*

64. ¶ The whole congregation together, *was* forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 65. Besides their servants and their maids, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and *there were*, among them two hundred singing-men and singing-women. 66. Their horses *were* seven hundred thirty and six: their mules two hundred forty and five: 67. Their camels, four hundred thirty and five: *their asses*, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. 68. ¶ And *some* of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: 69. They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work, threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests garments. 70. So the priests and the Levites, and *some* of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

Here



Here is, 1. The sum total of the company that returned now out of Babylon. The particular sums before-mentioned, amount not quite to thirty thousand, (twenty nine thousand eight hundred and eighteen) so that there were above twelve thousand that come not into any of those accounts, who, it is probable, were of the rest of the tribes of Israel, besides Judah and Benjamin, that could not tell of what particular family or city they were, but that they were Israelites, and of what tribe. Now, (1.) This was more than double the number that were carried captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, so that, as in Egypt, the time of their affliction was the time of their increase. (2.) These were but few to begin a nation with, and yet, by virtue of the old promise made to their fathers, they multiplied, so as before their last destruction by the Romans, about five hundred years after, to be a very populous country. When God saith, increase and multiply, *a little one shall become a thousand*.

2. Their retinue. They were themselves little better than servants, and therefore no wonder their servants were comparatively but few, *ver. 65.* and their beasts of burthen about as many, *ver. 66, 67.* It was not with them now, as in days past. But notice is taken of two hundred *singing-men and women* they had among them, who we will suppose intended as those, *2 Chron. xxxv. 25.* to excite *their mourning*, for it was foretold they should upon this occasion *go weeping*, *Jer. l. 4.* with ditties of lamentation.

3. Their oblations. It is said, *ver. 68, 69.* (1.) That they came to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, and yet that house, that holy and beautiful house, was now in ruin, a heap of rubbish; but, like their father Abraham, when the altar was gone, they came with devotion to the place of the altar, *Gen. xiii. 4.* and it is the character of the genuine sons of Zion, that they favour even the dust thereof, *Psal. cii. 14.* (2.) That they offered freely towards the setting of it up in its place. That, it seems, was the first house they talked of setting up, and tho' they came off a journey, and were beginning the world, two chargeable things, yet they offered, and offered freely towards the building of the temple. Let none complain of the necessary expences of their religion, but believe, that when they come to balance the account, they will find it quit cost. Their offering was nothing, in comparison with the offerings of the princes in David's time; then they offered by talents, *1 Chron. xxix. 7.* now by drams, yet these drams being after their ability, were as acceptable to God as those talents, like the widows two mites. The sixty one thousand drams of gold amounts by Cumberland's calculation, to so many pounds of our money, and so many groats. Every maneh, or pound of silver, he reckons to be sixty shekels, *viz. Thirty ounces*, which we may reckon seven pounds ten shillings of our money, so that this five thousand pound of silver will be above thirty seven thousand of our money. It seems God had blessed them with the increase of their wealth, as well as of their numbers in Babylon, and as God had prospered them, they gave cheerfully to the service of his house. (3.) That they dwelt in their cities, *ver. 70.* Tho' their cities were out of repair, yet because they were their cities, such as God assigned them, they were content to dwell in them, and were thankful for liberty and property; tho' they had little of pomp, plenty, or power. Their poverty was a bad cause, but their unity and unanimity, was a good effect of it. Here was room enough for them all, and all their substance, so that there was no strife among them, but perfect harmony, a blessed presage of their settlement, as their discords in the latter times of that state were of their ruin.

## C H A P. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left Israel in their cities, but we may well imagine what an ill posture their affairs were in, the ground untilled, the cities in ruins, all out of order; but here we have an account of the early care they took about the re-establishment of religion among them. Thus did they lay the foundation well, and begin their work at the right end. (1.) They set up an altar, and offered sacrifices upon it, kept the feasts, and contributed towards the rebuilding of the temple, *ver. 1—7.* (2.) They laid the foundation of the temple, with a mixture of joy and sorrow, *ver. 1—13.* This was the day of small things, which was not to be despised, *Zech. iv. 10.*

1. **A**ND when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together, as one man to Jerusalem. 2. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. 3. And they set the altar upon his bases, (for fear was upon them, because of the people of those countries) and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt-offerings, morning and evening. 4. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written and offered the daily burnt-

offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; 5. And afterward offered the continual burnt-offering, both of the new-moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a free-will-offering unto the LORD. 6. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto LORD: but the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid. 7. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oyl unto them of Zidon; and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar-trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa: according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

Here is, 1. A general assembly of the returned Israelites at Jerusalem, in the seventh month, *ver. 1.* We may suppose they came from Babylon in the spring, and must allow at least four months for the journey, for so long Ezra and his company were in coming, *Ezra vii. 9.* the seventh month therefore soon came; in which many of the feasts of the Lord were to be solemnized; and then they gathered themselves together by agreement among themselves, rather than by the command of authority, to Jerusalem: Tho' they were newly come to their cities, and had their hands full of business there, to provide necessaries for themselves and their families, which might have excused them from attending on God's altar, till the hurry was a little over, as many foolishly put off their coming to the communion, till they are settled in the world, yet such was their zeal for religion, now they were newly come from under correction for their irreligion, that they left all their business in the country, to attend God's altar; and (which is strange) in this pious zeal they were all of a mind, they came as one man. Let worldly business be postponed to the business of religion, and it will prosper the better.

2. The care which their leading men took to have an altar ready for them to attend upon. Jeshua and his brethren the priests, Zerubbabel and his brethren the princes, built the altar of the God of Israel, *ver. 2.* in the same place (it is likely) where it had stood, upon the same bases, *ver. 3.* Bishop Patrick observing, that before the temple was built, there seems to have been a tabernacle, pitched for the divine service, as was in David's time, not on mount Moriah, but mount Sion, *1 Chron. ix. 11, 18, 23.* supposeth this altar was erected there, to be used while the temple was in building. Let us learn hence, (1.) To begin with God. The more difficult and necessitous our case is, the more concerned we are to take him along with us in all our ways. If we expect to be directed by his oracles, let him be honoured by our offerings. (2.) To do what we can in the worship of God, when we cannot do what we would. They could not presently have a temple, but they would not be without an altar; Abraham wherever he came built an altar; and wherever we come, tho' we may perhaps want the benefit of the candlestick of preaching, and the shew-bread of the Eucharist, yet if we bring not the sacrifices of prayer and praise, we are wanting in our duty, for we have an altar that sanctifies the gift ever ready.

Observe the reason here given why they hastened to set up the altar, Fear was upon them, because of the people of the land; they were in the midst of enemies that bore ill will to them and their religion, for whom they were an unequal match. And (1.) Though they were so, yet they built the altar, so some read it; they would not be frightened from their religion by the opposition they were like to meet with in it. Never let the fear of man bring us into this snare. (2.) Because they were so, therefore they set up the altar. Apprehension of danger, should stir us up to our duty. Have we many enemies? Then it is good to have God our friend, and to keep up our correspondence with him. This good use we should make of our fears, we should be driven by them to our knees. Even Saul would think himself undone, if the enemy should come upon him, before he had made his supplication to God, *1 Sam. xii. 13.*

3. The sacrifices they offered upon the altar. The altar was reared to be used, and they used it accordingly. Let not those that have an altar starve it.

(1.) They began on the first day of the seventh month, *ver. 6.* It doth not appear they had any fire from heaven to begin with, as Moses and Solomon had, but common fire served them, as it did the patriarchs.

(2.) Having begun, they kept up the continual burnt-offering, *ver. 5.* morning and evening, *ver. 3.* They had known by sad experience, what it was to want the comfort of the daily sacrifice, to plead in their daily prayers, and now it was revived, they resolved not to let it fall again. The daily lamb typified the Lamb of God, whose righteousness must be our confidence in all our prayers. (3.) They observed all the set feasts of the Lord, and offered the sacrifices appointed for each, and particularly the feast of tabernacles, *ver. 4, 5.* Now they had received such great mercy from God, that joyful feast was in a special manner seasonable: And now they were beginning to settle in their cities, it might do well to remember their fathers dwelling in tents in the wilderness



wilderness. That feast also, which had a peculiar reference to gospel times, (as appears, *Zech. xiv. 18.*) was brought in a special manner into reputation, now those times drew on. Of the services of this feast, which continued seven days, and had peculiar sacrifices appointed, it is said, they did *as the duty of every day required*. See *Numb. xxix. 13, 17, &c.* The word, or matter of the day in its day. So it is in the original, *Verbum diei in die suo*. A phrase that has become proverbial with those that have used themselves to scripture language; and if the feast of tabernacles was a figure of a gospel conversation, in respect of continual weariedness from the world and joy in God; we may infer, that it concerns us all to do the *work of the day in its day, according as the duty of the day requires*, i. e. (1.) We must improve time, by finding some business to do every day, that will turn to a good account. (2.) We must improve opportunity, by accommodating our selves to that which is the proper business of the present day. Every thing is beautiful in its season. The tenth day of this month, was the day of atonement, a solemn day, and very seasonable now; it is very probable they observed it, yet it is not mentioned, nor indeed, in all the Old Testament, do I remember the least mention of the observance of that day; as if it were enough, that we have the law of it, *Lev. xvi.* and the gospel of it, which was the chief intention of it in the New Testament.

(4.) They offered *every mans free-will offering*, ver. 5. The law required much, but they brought more, for tho' they had little wealth to support the expence of their sacrifices, they had much zeal, and we may suppose, spared at their own tables, that they might plentifully supply God's altar. Happy they, that bring with them out of the furnace of affliction, such a holy heat as this.

4. The preparation they made for the building of the temple, ver. 7. This they applied themselves immediately to; for while we do what we can, we must still be aiming to do more and better. Tyre and Zidon must now, as of old, furnish them with workmen, and Lebanon with timber; orders for both which they had from Cyrus; what God calls us to, we may depend upon his providence to furnish us with.

8. ¶ Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD. 9. Then stood Jeshua with his sons, and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons, and their brethren the Levites. 10. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11. And they sung together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because *he is good*, for his mercy *endureth* for ever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12. But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, *who were* ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy: 13. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy, from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

There was no dispute among the returned Jews, whether they should build the temple or no, that was immediately resolved on, and that it should be done with all speed; what comfort could they take in their own land, if they had not that token of God's presence with them, and the record of his name among them: we have here therefore an account of the beginning of that good work. Observe,

1. When it was begun, in the second day of the second month, as soon as ever the season of the year would permit, (ver. 8.) and when they had ended the solemnities of the passover. They took little more than half a year for making preparation of the ground, and materials; so much were their hearts upon it. Note, When any good work is to be done, it will be our wisdom to set about it quickly, and not to lose time; yea, tho' we foresee difficulty and opposition in it. Thus we engage our selves to it, and engage God for us. Well begun, (we say) is half ended.

2. Who began it, Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and their brethren. Then the work of God is likely to go on well, when magistrates, No. xxxii.

ministers, and people, are hearty for it, and agree in their places to promote it. It was God that gave them one heart for this service, and it boded well.

3. Who were employed to further it, they appointed the *Levites to set forward the work*, ver. 8. and they did it by *setting forward the workmen*, ver. 9. and strengthening their hands with good and comfortable words. Note, They that do not work themselves, may yet do good service, by quickning and encouraging those that do work.

4. How God was praised at the laying of the foundation of the temple, ver. 10, 11. The priests with the trumpets, appointed by Moses, and the Levites with the cymbals, appointed by David, made up a consort of musick, not to please the ear, but to assist the singing of that everlasting hymn, which will never be out of date, and to which our tongues should never be *out of tune*, *God is good, and his mercy endureth for ever*. The burthen of *Psal. cxxxvi.* Let all the streams of mercy be run up to the fountain. Whatever our condition is, how many soever our griefs and fears, let it be owned that God is good; and whatever fails, that his mercy fails not. Let this be sung with application, as here; not only his mercy endures for ever, but it endures for ever towards Israel; Israel, when captives in a strange land, and strangers in their own land. However it be, yet *God is good to Israel*, *Psal. lxxiii. 1.* good to us. Let the reviving of the church's interests, when they seemed dead, be ascribed to the continuance of God's mercy for ever, for therefore the church continues.

5. How the people were differently affected. A remarkable mixture of various affections there was upon this occasion. Different sentiments there were among the people of God, and each expressed himself according to his sentiments, and yet there was no disagreement among them, their minds were not alienated from each other, nor the common concern retarded by it.

1. Those that only knew the misery of having no temple at all, when they saw but the foundation of one laid, praised the Lord with shouts of joy, ver. 11. To them even this foundation seemed great, and was as life from the dead; to their hungry souls even this was sweet. They shouted so that *the noise was heard afar off*. Note, We ought to be thankful for the beginnings of mercy, tho' it be not yet come to perfection; and the foundations of a temple, after long desolations, cannot but be fountains of joy to every faithful Israelite.

2. Those that remembered the glory of the first temple, which Solomon built, and considered how far this was likely to be inferior to that, perhaps in dimensions, however in magnificence and sumptuousness, *wept with a loud voice*, ver. 12. If we date the captivity with the first, from the fourth of Jehoiakim, it was but about fifty-two years since the temple was burnt, if from Jeconiah's captivity, it was but fifty-nine. So that many, now alive might remember it standing; and a great mercy it was to the captives, that they had the lives of so many of their priests and Levites lengthened out, who could tell them what they themselves remembered of the glory of Jerusalem, to quicken them in their return. These lamented the disproportion between this temple and the former. And, (1.) There was some reason for it, and if they turned their tears into the right channel, and bewailed the sin that was the cause of this melancholy change, they did well. Sin sullies the glory of any church or people, and when they find themselves diminished and brought low, that must bear the blame. (2.) Yet it was their infirmity to mingle those tears with the common joys, and so cast a damp upon them. They *despised the day of small things*; and were unthankful for the good they enjoyed, because it was not so much as their ancestors had, tho' it was much more than they deserved. In the harmony of publick joys let not us be jarring strings. It was an aggravation of the discouragements they hereby gave to the people, that they were priests and Levites, who should have known and taught others how to be duly affected under various providences, and not to let the remembrance of former afflictions drown the sense of present mercies.

This mixture of sorrow and joy here is a representation of this world; some are bathing in rivers of joy, while others are drowned in floods of tears. In heaven are all singing, and none sighing, in hell all are weeping and wailing, and none rejoicing, but here on earth we can scarce discern the *shouts of joy from the noise of the weeping*. Let us learn to *rejoice with them that do rejoice*, and *weep with them that weep*; and our selves to rejoice as tho' we rejoiced not, and weep as tho' we wept not.

#### C H A P. IV.

The good work of rebuilding the temple was no sooner begun, but it presently met with opposition from those that bore ill will to it; The Samaritans were enemies to the Jews and their religion, and they set themselves to obstruct it. (1.) They offered to come in partners in the building of it, that they might have it in their power to retard it, but were refused, ver. 1—3. (2.) They discouraged them in it, and dissuaded them from it, ver. 4, 5. (3.) They basely misrepresented the undertaking, and the undertakers to the king of Persia; by a memorial they sent him, ver. 6—16. (4.) They obtained from him an order to stop the building, ver. 17—22. which they immediately put in execution, ver. 23, 24



1. **N**OW when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel: 2. Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you, for we seek your God, as ye do, and we do sacrifice unto him, since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. 3. But Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, You have nothing to do with us, to build an house unto our God, but we our selves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. 4. Then the people of the land weakned the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building. 5. And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

We have here an instance of the old enmity that was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. God's temple cannot be built but Satan will rage, and the *gates of hell* will *fight against it*. The gospel kingdom was in like manner to be set up with much struggle and contention. And in this respect the glory of the latter house was greater than the glory of the former, and it was more a figure of the temple of Christ's church, in that Solomon built his temple when *there was no adversary, nor evil occurrent*, 1 Kings v. 4. But this second temple was built, notwithstanding great opposition, in the removing and conquering of which, and the bringing of the work to perfection at last in despite of it, the wisdom, power, and goodness of God was much glorified, and the church encouraged to trust in him.

1. The undertakers are here called *the children of the captivity*, ver. 1. which makes them look very little. They were newly come out of captivity, were born in captivity, had still the marks of their captivity upon them, tho' they were not now captives, they were under the control of those whose captives they had lately been. Israel was God's son, his first-born, but by their iniquity they sold and enslaved themselves, and so became children of the captivity; but it should seem, the thought of their being so quickened them to this work, for it was by their neglect of the temple that they lost their freedom.

2. The opposers of the undertaking, are here said to be the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, not the Chaldeans or Persians, they gave them no disturbance, let them build and welcome, but the relicks of the ten tribes, and the foreigners that had joined themselves to them, and patched up that mongrel religion we had an account of, 2 Kings xvii. 33. *They feared the Lord, and served their own gods too*. They are called *the people of the land*, ver. 4. The worst enemies Judah and Benjamin had, were these that *said they were Jews, and were not*, Rev. iii. 9.

3. The opposition they gave, had in it much of the subtilty of the old serpent. When they heard that the temple was in building, they were presently aware it would be a fatal blow to their superstition, and set themselves to oppose it. They had not power to do it forcibly, but they try all the ways they can to do it effectually.

1. They offered their service to build with them, only that thereby they might get an opportunity to retard the work, while they pretended to further it.

Now, (1.) Their offer was plausible enough, and looked kind, *we will build with you*, will help you to contrive, and will contribute towards the expence; *for we seek your God as you do*, ver. 2. This was false, for though they sought the same God, they did not seek him only, nor seek him in the way he appointed, and therefore did not seek him as they did. Herein they designed, if it were possible to hinder the building of it, however to hinder their comfortable enjoyment of it; as good almost not have it, as not have it to themselves, for the pure worship of the true God, and him only. Thus are the *kisses of an enemy deceitful*; his words *smoother than butter*, when *war is in his heart*.

But, (2.) Their refusal of their profered service was very just, ver. 3. *The chief of the fathers of Israel* were soon aware that they meant them no kindness, whatever they pretended, but really designed to do them a mischief, and therefore (tho' they had need enough of help, if it had been such as they could confide in) told them plainly, *you have nothing to do with us*, have no part nor lot in this matter, are not true-born Israelites, nor faithful worshippers of God, *you worship you know not what*, John iv. 22. You are none of those with whom we dare hold communion, and therefore *we our selves will build*; they plead not to them the law of their God, which forbade them to mingle themselves with strangers, tho' that especially they had an eye to, but that which they would take more notice of the king's commission, which was directed to them only, the king of Persia has commanded us to build this house, and we shall distrust and affront him, if we call in a foreign aid. Note, In doing good there is need of the *wisdom of the serpent*, as well as the *innocency of the dove*; and we

have need, as it follows there, to *beware of men*, Matth. x. 16, 17. Take heed who we go partners with, and on whose hand we lean. While we trust God with a pious confidence, we must trust men with a prudent jealousy and caution.

2. When this plot failed, they did what they could to divert them from the work, and discourage them in it, weakned their hands, by telling them it was in vain to attempt it, calling them *foolish builders*, who began what they were not able to finish, and by their insinuations troubled them, and made them drive heavily in it: all were not alike zealous in it, those that were cool and indifferent, were by these artifices drawn off from the work which wanted their help, ver. 4. And because what they themselves said the Jews would suspect to be ill meant, and to be influenced by, they under-hand *hired counsellors against them*, that pretending to advise them for the best, should dissuade them from proceeding, and so *frustrate their purpose*, ver. 5. or dissuade the men of Tyre and Sidon from furnishing them with the timber they had bargained for, chap. iii. 7. Or, what business they had at the Persian court, to solicit for any particular grants or favours, pursuant to the general edict for their liberty, there were those that were hired, and lay ready to appear of counsel against them. Wonder not at the restlessness of the church's enemies, in their attempts against the building of God's temple: he whom they serve, and whose work they are doing, is *unwearied in walking to and fro through the earth* to do mischief. And let those who discourage a good work, and weaken the hands of them that are employed in it, see whose pattern they follow.

6. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. 7. ¶ And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithridath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. 8. Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: 9. Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Sufanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, 10. And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time. 11. ¶ This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king, Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time. 12. Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us, are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joyned the foundations. 13. Be it known now unto the king, that if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings. 14. Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour: therefore have we sent and certified the king. 15. That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings, and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed. 16. We certify the king, that if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

Cyrus steadfastly adhered to the Jews interest, and supported his own grant, it was to no purpose to offer any thing to him in prejudice of it, what he did was from a good principle of the fear of God, and therefore he stuck to it; but tho' his reign in all was thirty years, yet after the conquest of Babylon, and his decree for the release of the Jews, some think he reigned but three years, others seven, and then either died, or gave up that part of his government, in which his successor was Ahasuerus, ver. 6. called also Artaxerxes, ver. 7. Supposed to be the same, that in heathen authors, is called Cambyfes, who had never taken that cognizance of the despised Jews, as to concern himself for them, nor had he that knowledge of the God of Israel that his predecessor had; to him these Samaritans applied themselves by letter, for an order to stop the building of the temple; and they did it in the beginning of his reign, being resolved to lose no time, when they thought they had a king for their purpose. See how watchful



ful the church's enemies are to take the first opportunity of doing it a mischief, let not its friends be less careful to do it a kindness. Here is,

1. The general purport of the letter which they sent to the king, to inform him of this matter. It is called, *ver. 6. An accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.* The Devil is the *accuser of the brethren*, Rev. xii. 10. And he carries on his malicious designs against them, not only by accusing them himself before our God, as he did Job, but by acting as a lying spirit, in the mouths of his instruments, whom he employs to accuse them before magistrates and kings, and to make them odious to the many, and obnoxious to the mighty. Marvel not, if the same arts be still used to run down serious godliness.

2. The persons concerned in writing this letter. The contrivers are named, *ver. 7.* that plotted the thing; the writers, *ver. 8.* that put it into form, and the subscribers, *ver. 9.* that concurred in it, and joined with them in this representation, this misrepresentation I should call it. Now see here, (1.) How the *rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his temple*, with their companions; the building of the temple would do them no harm, yet they appear against it with the utmost concern, perhaps because the prophets of the God of Israel had foretold the *famishing and perishing of all the gods of the heathen*, Zeph. ii. 11. Jer. x. 11. (2.) How the people concurred with them in imagining this vain thing. They followed the cry, tho' ignorant of the merits of the cause: all the several colonies of that plantation (nine are here mentioned) who had their denomination from the cities or countries of Assyria, Chaldea, Persia, &c. from whence they came; set their hands by their representatives to this letter: perhaps they were incensed against these returned Jews, because many of the ten tribes were among them, whose estates they were got into the possession of, and of whom they were therefore jealous, lest they should attempt the recovery of them hereafter.

3. A copy of the letter it self, which Ezra inserts here, out of the records of the kingdom of Persia, into which it had been entred; and it is well we have it, that we may see whence the like methods still taken to expose good people, and baffle good designs, are copied.

1. They represent themselves, as very loyal to the government, and mightily concerned for the honour and interest of it; and would have it thought that the king had no such loving faithful subjects in all his dominions as they were, nor so sensible of their obligations to him, *ver. 14. Because we are salted with the salt of the palace*, so it is in the margin; we have our salary from the court, and could no more live without it, than flesh could be preserved without salt; or, as some think, their pay or pension was sent them in salt; or, because we had our education in the palace, and were brought up at the king's table, as we find, *Dan. i. 5.* These were whom he intended to prefer, they did *eat their portion of the king's meat*. Now, in consideration of this, *it is not meet for us to see the king's dishonour*; and therefore they urge him to stop the building of the temple, which would certainly be the king's dishonour, more than any thing else. Note, A secret enmity to Christ and his gospel, is oft gilded over with a pretended affection to Cæsar and his power. The Jews hated the Roman government, and yet, to serve a turn, could cry, *We have no king but Cæsar*. But (to allude to this) if they that lived upon the crown, thought themselves bound in gratitude, thus to support the interest of it, much more reason have we thus to argue ourselves into a pious concern for God's honour; *we have our maintenance from the God of heaven*, and are *salted with his salt*, live upon his bounty, and are the care of his providence, and therefore it is not *meet for us to see his dishonour*, without resenting it, and doing what we can to prevent it.

2. They represent the Jews as disloyal, and dangerous to the government; that Jerusalem was *the rebellious and bad city*, *ver. 12. hurtful to kings and provinces*, *ver. 15.* See how Jerusalem, *the joy of the whole earth*, Psal. xlviii. 2. is here reproached as the scandal of the whole earth. The enemies of the church could not do the ill things they design against it, if they did not first put it into an ill name. Jerusalem had been a loyal city to its rightful princes, and its present inhabitants were as well affected to the king and his government, as any of his provinces whatsoever. Daniel, who was a Jew, had lately approved himself so faithful to his prince, that his worst enemies could find no fault in his management, *Dan. vi. 4.* But thus was Elijah most unjustly charged with troubling Israel, the apostles with *turning the world upside down*, and Christ himself with *perverting the nation*, and *forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar*, and we must not think it strange, if the same game be still plied. Now, here,

1. The history of what was past is invidious: that *within this city, sedition had been moved of old time*, and for *that cause it was destroyed*, *ver. 15.* It cannot be denied, but that there was some colour given for his suggestion by the attempts of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, which if they had kept close to their religion, and this temple they were now re-building, they had never come under. But it must be considered, (1.) That they were themselves and their ancestors sovereign princes, and their efforts to recover their rights, if there had not been in them the violation of an oath, for ought I know

had been justifiable, and successful too, had they taken the right method, and made their peace with God first. (2.) Tho' these Jews and their princes had been guilty of rebellion, yet it was unjust therefore to fasten this as an indelible brand upon this city, as if that must for ever after go under the name of *the rebellious and bad city*. The Jews in their captivity had given such instances of their good behaviour, as were sufficient to roll away that one reproach with any reasonable men; for they were instructed (and we have reason to hope they observed their instructions) to *seek the peace of the cities where they were captives*, and *pray to the Lord for it*, Jer. xxix. 7. It was therefore very unfair, yet not uncommon, for them to impute the iniquity of the fathers to the children.

2. Their information concerning what they were now doing, was grossly false in matter of fact. Very careful they are to inform the king that they had *set up the walls of this city*, nay, had finished them, so it is in the margin, and *joined the foundations*, *ver. 12.* when it was nothing so: They had only begun to build the temple, which Cyrus commanded them to do, but for the walls, there was nothing done, nor designed towards the repair of them, as appears by the posture they were in many years after, *Neh. i. 3.* all in ruins. *What shall be given, and what done to these false tongues?* Nay, which is worse, these false pens, *sharp arrows doubtless of the mighty, and coals of juniper*, Psal. cxx. 3, 4. If they had not been perfectly lost to all virtue and honour, they would not, and if they had not been very secure of the king's countenance, they durst not have written that to the king, which all their neighbours knew to be a notorious lie. See *Prov. xxix. 12.*

3. The prognosticks of the consequences were altogether groundless and absurd. They are very confident, and would have the king believe it upon their word, that if this city be built, not only the Jews would *pay no toll, tribute, or custom*, *ver. 13.* but (since a great lie is as soon spoken as a little one) that the king would have no portion at all on this side the river, *ver. 16.* that all the countries on this side Euphrates would instantly revolt, drawn to it by their example; and if the prince in possession should connive at this, he would wrong, not only himself, but his successors, *thou shalt endamage the revenue of the king's*. See how every line in this letter breathes both the subtilty and malice of the old serpent.

17. ¶ Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time. 18. The letter which ye sent unto us, hath been plainly read before me. 19. And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found, that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. 20. There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom was paid unto them. 21. Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me. 22. Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings? 23. ¶ Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. 24. Then ceased the work of the house of God, which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Here is, 1. The orders which the king of Persia gave, in answer to the information sent him by the Samaritans against the Jews. He suffered himself to be imposed upon by their fraud and falsehood, took no care to examine the allegations of their petition, concerning that which the Jews were now doing, but took it for granted, the matter of fact was true, and was very willing to gratify them with an order of council to stay proceedings.

(1.) He consulted the records concerning Jerusalem, and found that it had indeed rebelled against the king of Babylon, and therefore that it was, as they called it, a *bad city*, *ver. 19.* And withal, that in times past kings had reigned there, to whom all the countries on that side the river had been tributaries, *ver. 20.* And therefore there was danger, that if ever they were able (which they were never likely to be) they would claim them again. Thus he saith as they said, and pretends to give a reason for it. See the hard fate of princes, that must see and hear with other mens eyes and ears, and give judgment upon things as they are represented to them, and often are they represented falsely. Therefore God's judgment is always just, because he sees things as they are, and it is according to truth.

(2.) He



(2.) He appointed these Samaritans to stop the building of the city immediately, till further order should be given about it, *ver. 21, 22.* Neither they in their letter, nor he, in his order, makes any mention of the temple, and the building of that, because both they knew, and he knew, that they had not only a permission, but a command from Cyrus to re-build that, which even they had not the confidence to move for the repeal of, but only of the city, let not that be built, *viz. as a city with walls and gates; whatever you do, prevent that, lest damage grow to the hurt of the kings; he would not that the crown should lose by his wearing it.*

3. The use which the enemies of the Jews made of these orders, they had fraudulently obtained; upon the receipt of them, they went up *in haste to Jerusalem, ver. 23. Their feet run to evil, Prov. i. 16.* They were impatient till the builders were served with this prohibition, which they produced as their warrant to *make them cease by force and power.* As they abused the king in obtaining this order, by their mis-informations, so they abused him in the execution of it; for the order was only to prevent the walling of the city. But having force and power on their side, they construed it as relating to the temple, for that was it which they had an ill will to, and which they only wanted some colour to hinder the building of. There was indeed a general clause in the order to *cause these men to cease,* which had reference to their complaint about building the walls, but they applied it to the building of the temple. See what need we have to pray, not only for kings, but for all in authority under them, and *the governours sent by them,* because the *quietness and peaceableness* of our lives, *in all godliness and honesty,* depends very much upon the integrity and wisdom of inferior magistrates, as well as the supream.

The consequent was, that *the work of the house of God ceased* for a time, through the power and insolence of its enemies; and so through the coldness and indifferency of its friends it stood still till the second year of Darius Hystaspis, for to me it seems clear by the thread of this sacred history, that it was that Darius, *ver. 24.* And tho' now a stop was put to it by the violence of the Samaritans; yet that soon after they might have gone on by connivance, if they had had a due affection to the work, appears by this, that before they had that express warrant from the king for doing it, *chap. vi.* they were reprov'd by the prophets for not doing it, *chap. v. 1.* compared with *Hag. i. 1, &c.* If they had taken due care to inform Cambyes with the truth of this case, perhaps he had recalled his order; but, for ought I know, some of the builders were almost as willing it should cease as the adversaries themselves were. At some times the church hath suffered more by the coldness of its friends, than by the heat of its enemies; but both together commonly makes church-work flow work.

## CHAP. V.

*We left the temple-work at a full stop, but being God's work it shall be revived, and here we have an account of the reviving of it. It was hindred by might and power, but it was set a-going again by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Now here we are told how that blessed Spirit, (1.) Warmed its cool-hearted friends, and excited them to build, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Cooled its hot-headed enemies, and brought them to better tempers; for tho' they secretly disliked the work, as much as those in the foregoing chapter, yet, (1.) They were more mild towards the builders, ver. 3—5. (2.) They were more fair in their representation of the matter to the king, which here we have an account of, ver. 6—17.*

1. **T**HEN the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, *even unto them.* 2. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.

Some reckon it was but nine years, I am willing to believe fifteen was the outside that the building of the temple stood at a stay; during which time they had an altar, and a tabernacle, which, no doubt, they made use of? for when we cannot do what we would, we must do what we can in the service of God, and be sorry we can do no better. But the counsellors that were hired to hinder the work, *chap. iv. 5.* told them, and perhaps with a pretence to inspiration, that the time was not come for the building of the temple, *Hag. i. 2.* Urging, that it was long ere the time came for the building of Solomon's temple; and thus the people were made easy in their own *cieled houses,* while *God's house lay waste.* Now here we are told how life was put into that good cause which seemed to lie dead.

1. They had two good ministers, that in God's name earnestly persuaded them to set the wheel a-going again, Haggai and Zechariah, who both began to prophesy in the second year of Darius, as appears, *Hag. i. 1. Zech. i. 1.* Observe, (1.) The temple of God among men is to be built by prophecy, not by secular force (that oft hinders it, but seldom furthers it) but by *the word of God;* as the *weapons of our warfare,* so the instruments of our

building *are not carnal* but *spiritual,* and they are the ministers of the gospel that are the master-builders. (2.) It is the business of God's prophets to stir up God's people to that which is good, and to help them in it, to strengthen their hands, and by suitable considerations, fetched from the word of God to quicken them to their duty, and encourage them in it. (3.) It is a sign God has mercy in store for a people when he raiseth up prophets among them to be their helpers in the way and work of God, their guides, overseers, and rulers.

Further observe, (1.) To whom these prophets were sent. They prophesied unto the Jews (for as to them pertained the giving of the law; so also the gift of prophecy, and therefore they are called *the children of the prophets,* Acts iii. 25. because they were educated under their tuition and instruction) *even unto them, upon them, even upon them,* so it is in the original, as Ezekiel prophesied *upon the dry bones,* that they might live, *Ezek. xxxvii. 4.* They prophesied against them, so bishop Patrick, for they reprov'd them because they did not build the temple. The word of God, if it be received now as a testimony to us, will not be received another day as a testimony against us, and will judge us. (2.) Who sent them. They prophesied in the name, or as some read it, *in the cause,* or for the sake of the God of Israel; they spake by commission from him, and argued from his authority over them, his interest in them, and the concern of his glory among them.

2. They had two good magistrates, that were forward and active in this work; Zerubbabel their chief prince, and Jeshua their chief priest, *ver. 2.* They that are in places of dignity and power, ought with their dignity to put honour upon, and with their power to put life into, every good work; thus it becometh them that precede, and them that preside with an exemplary care and zeal to *fulfil all righteousness,* and to *go before in a good work.* These great men thought it no disparagement to them, but a happiness to be taught, and prescribed to by the prophets of the Lord; and were glad of their help in reviving this good work. Read the first chapter of the prophecy of Haggai here, (for that is the best comment on these two verses) and see what great things God doth by his word, which he magnifies above all his name, and by his Spirit working with it.

3. ¶ At the same time came to them Tatnai, governour on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? 4. Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? 5. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter. 6. ¶ The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governour on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king: 7. They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace. 8. Be it known unto the king that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. 9. Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? 10. We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. 11. And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded, and set up. 12. But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. 13. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. 14. And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon; those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governour: 15. And said unto him, Take these vessels, go carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place. 16. Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem. And since that time even until



until now, hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished. 17. Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the kings treasure-house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

We have here,

1. The cognizance which their neighbours soon took of the reviving of this good work; a jealous eye it seems they had upon them, and no sooner did the Spirit of God stir up the friends of the temple to appear for it, but the evil spirit stirred up its enemies to appear against it. While the people built and ciled their own houses, their enemies gave them no molestation, Hag. i. 4. tho' the king's order was to put a stop to the building of the city, chap. iv. 21. But when they fell to work again at the temple, then the alarm is taken, and all heads are at work to hinder it, ver. 3. 4. The adversaries are here named; Tatnai and Shetharboznai; the governors we read of, chap. iv. were, it is probable, displaced at the beginning of this reign, as is usual; it is the policy of princes often to change their deputies, proconsuls, and rulers of provinces. These, tho' real enemies to the building of the temple, were men of better temper than the other, and that made some conscience of telling truth; if *all men have not faith*, 2 Thes. iii. 2. it is well some have, and a sense of honour. The church's enemies are not all alike wicked and unreasonable. The historian begins to relate what passed between the builders and those inquisitors, ver. 3, 4. but breaks off his account referring himself to the ensuing copy of the letter they sent to the king, where the same doth and may appear, more fully and at large, which he began to abridge, ver. 4. or make an extract out of, but upon second thoughts inserted the whole.

2. The care which the divine providence took of this good work, ver. 5. *The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews*, who were active in the work, so that their enemies could not cause them to cease, as they would have done, till the matter came to Darius. They desired they would only cease, till they had instructions from the king about it. But they would not so much as yield them that, for *the eye of God was upon them*, even their God. And, (1.) That baffled their enemies, infatuated and inebriated them; and protected the builders from their malicious designs. While we are employed in God's work, we are taken under his special protection, his eye is upon us for good, seven eyes upon one stone in his temple, see Zech. iii. 9.—iv. 10. (2.) That quickened them; the elders of the Jews saw *the eye of God upon them*, to observe what they did, and own them in what they did well, and then they had courage enough to face their enemies, and to go on vigorously with their work, maugre all the opposition they met with. Our eye upon God observing his eye upon us, will keep us to our duty and encourage us in it when the difficulties are never so discouraging.

3. The account they sent to the king of this matter. In which we may observe,

1. How fully the elders of the Jews gave the Samaritans an account of their proceedings. They finding them both busy and prosperous, that all hands were at work to run up this building, and that it went fast on, put this question to them. By what authority they did these things? and who gave them that authority? who set them to work, and whether they had that which would bear them out? To this they answered, that they had sufficient warrant to do what they did; for, (1.) *We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth*; the God we worship is not a local deity, and therefore we cannot be charged with making a faction, or setting up a sect, in building this temple to his honour. But we pay our homage to a God, on whom the whole creation depends, and therefore ought to be protected and assisted by all, and hindered by none. It is the wisdom as well as duty of kings, to countenance the servants of the God of heaven. (2.) We have a prescription to this house; it was built for the honour of our God by Solomon many ages ago. It is no novel invention of our own, we are but *raising the foundations of many generations*, Isa. v. 8, 12. (3.) It was to punish us for our sins, that we were for a time put out of the possession of this house; not because the gods of the nations had prevailed against our God, but because we had provoked him, ver. 12. for which he delivered us and our temple, into the hands of the king of Babylon, but never intended thereby, to put a final period to our religion. We were only suspended for a time, not deprived for ever. (4.) We have the royal decree of Cyrus, to justify us and bear us out in what we do. He not only permitted and allowed us, but charged and commanded us to build this house, ver. 13. and to build it in its place, ver. 15. the same place where it had stood before. And this not only in compassion to the Jews, but in veneration of their God, saying, *he is the God*. He also delivered the vessels of the temple, to one whom he entrusted to see them restored to their antient place and use, ver. 14. And they had these to shew in confirmation of what they alledged. (5.) The building was begun according to this order, as soon as ever we were returned, so that we have not forfeited the benefit of the order, for want

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of pursuing it in time, still it has been in building, but because we have met with opposition, it is not finished. But observe they mention not the falshood and malice of the former governors, nor make any complaint of that, tho' they had cause enough, to teach us not to render bitterness for bitterness, nor the most just reproach, no not for that which is most unjust, but to think it enough, if we can obtain fair treatment for the future, without an invidious repetition of former injuries, ver. 16. This is the account they give of their proceedings, not asking what authority they had to examine them, or upbraiding them with their idolatry and superstitions, and medley religion. Let us learn hence, with meekness and fear, to give a reason of the hope that is in us, 1 Pet. iii. 15. rightly to understand, and then readily to declare what we do in God's service, and why we do it.

2. How fairly the Samaritans represented this to the king. (1.) They call the temple at Jerusalem, the *house of the great God*, ver. 8. for tho' the Samaritans, as it should seem, had yet gods many, and lords many, they owned the God of Israel to be the *great God*, that is above all gods, it is the house of the *great God*, and therefore we dare not oppose the building of it without orders from thee. (2.) They tell him truly what was done, not as their predecessors did, that they were fortifying the city, as if they intended war, but only rearing the temple, as those that intended worship, ver. 8. (3.) They fully represent their plea, tell him what they had to say for themselves, and are willing the cause should be set in a true light. And then lastly, They leave it to the king to consult the records, whether Cyrus had indeed made such a decree, and then to give directions as he should think fit, ver. 17. We have reason to think, if Artaxerxes in the foregoing chapter had had the Jews cause as fairly represented to him, as it was here to Darius, he would not have ordered the work to be hindered. God's people could not be persecuted, if they were not belied; could not be baited, if they were not dressed up in bears skins. Let but the cause of God and truth be fairly stated, and fairly heard, and it will keep its ground.

## CHAP. VI.

*How solemnly the foundation of the temple was laid, we read chap. iii. How slowly the building went on, and with how much difficulty we found, chap. iv. and v. but how gloriously the top stone was at length brought forth with shoutings, we find in this chapter, and even we at this distance of time, when we read of it, may cry, grace, grace to it: As for God, his work is perfect; it may be slow work, but it will be sure work. We have here, (1.) A recital of the decree of Cyrus for the building of the temple, ver. 1—5. (2.) The enforcing of that decree by a new order from Darius for the perfecting of that work, ver. 6—12. (3.) The finishing of it thereupon, ver. 13—15. (4.) The solemn dedication of it when it was built, ver. 16—18. And the handselling of it (as I may say) with the celebration of the passover, ver. 19—22. And now we may say, that in Judah and Jerusalem things went very well.*

1. **T**HEN Darius the king made a decree and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. 2. And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written: 3. In the first year of Cyrus the king, the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid, the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits. 4. With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expences be given out of the kings house. 5. And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple, which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God. 6. Now therefore Tatnai, governour beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: 7. Let the work of this house of God alone, let the governour of the Jews, and the elders of the Jews, build this house of God in his place. 8. Moreover, I make a decree, what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: that of the kings goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. 9. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt,



salt, wine, and oyl, according to the appointment of the priests which *are* at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: 10. That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and of his sons. 11. Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon, and let his house be made a dunghil for this. 12. And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people that shall put to their hand, to alter *and* to destroy this house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: I Darius have made a decree, let it be done with speed.

We have here,

1. The decree of Cyrus for the building of the temple repeated. To this the Samaritans referred themselves, because the Jews pleaded it, and perhaps hoped it would not be found, and then their plea would be over-ruled, and a stop put to their work. Search was ordered to be made for it among the records, for it seems the tribes had not taken care to provide themselves with an authentick copy of it, which might have stood them in good stead, but they must appeal to the original. It was looked for in *Babylon*, ver. 1. where Cyrus then was, when he signed it. But when it was not found there, Darius did not make that a pretence to conclude, that therefore there was no such decree, and thereupon to give judgment against the Jews, but it is probable, having himself heard for certain, that such a decree was made, he ordered the rolls in other places to be searched, and at length it was found at Achmetha, in the province of the Medes, ver. 2. Perhaps some that durst not destroy it, yet hid it there out of ill will to the Jews, that they might lose the benefit of it. But providence so ordered that it came to light; and it is here inserted, ver. 3, 4, 5. (1.) Here is a warrant for the building of the temple, *let the house of God at Jerusalem, yea, let that house be builded*. So it may be read, within such and such dimensions, and with such and such materials. (2.) A warrant for the taking of the expences of the building out of the king's revenue, ver. 4. We do not find that they had received what was here ordered them, the face of things at court being soon changed. (3.) A warrant for the restoring of the vessels and utensils of the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away, ver. 5. with order that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should return them each to their place in the house of God.

2. The confirmation of it by a decree of Darius grounded upon it, and in pursuance of it. By which,

1. He forbids his officers to do any thing in opposition to the building of the temple. The manner of expression intimates, that he knew they had a mind to hinder it, for, *(saith he) be ye far from thence*, ver. 6. *Let the work of this house of God alone*, ver. 7. Thus was the wrath of the enemy *made to praise God*, and the remainder thereof did he restrain.

2. He orders them out of his own revenue, to assist the builders with money, (1.) For carrying on the building, ver. 8. Herein he pursues the example of Cyrus, ver. 4. (2.) For maintaining the sacrifices there when it was built, ver. 9. He orders they should be supplied with every thing they wanted, both for burnt-offerings and meat-offerings. He was content it should be rent-charge upon his revenue, and orders it should be paid every day, and this without fail, that they may offer sacrifices and prayers with them (for the patriarchs when they offered sacrifice, *called on the name of the Lord*, so did Samuel, Elijah, and others) for the life, *i. e.* the happiness and prosperity of the king and his sons, ver. 10. See here how he gives honour, (1.) To Israel's God whom he calls once and again, the *God of heaven*. (2.) To his ministers, in ordering his commissioners to give out supplies for the temple-service, at the appointment of the priests; they that thought to have controlled them, now must be in this matter at their command. It was a new thing for God's priests to have such an interest in the publick money. (3.) To prayer, *that they may pray for the life of the king*. He knew they were a praying people, and had heard that God was nigh to them in all that which they called him for. He was sensible he needed their prayers, and might receive benefit by them; and was therefore kind to them, that he might have an interest in their prayers. It is the duty of God's people to pray for those that are in authority over them, not only for the good and gentle, but also for the froward: but they are particularly bound in gratitude, to pray for their protectors and benefactors: and it is the wisdom of princes to desire their prayers, and to engage them. Let not the greatest princes despise the prayers of the meanest saints; it is desirable to have them for us, and dreadful to have them against us.

3. He enforceth his decree with a penalty, ver. 11. Let none either oppose the work and service of the temple, or withhold the supports granted to it by the crown, upon pain of death: If any alter this decree, let him be *hanged before his own door*, as we say, hanged upon a beam of his own house, and as an execrable man, *let his house be made a dunghil*.

4. He entails a divine curse upon all those kings and people that should ever have any hand in the destruction of this house, ver. 12. what he could not do himself for the protection of the temple, he desires that God, *to whom vengeance belongs*, would do. This speaks him zealous in the cause; and tho' this temple was at length most justly destroyed by the righteous hand of God, yet perhaps the Romans, who were the instruments of that destruction, felt the effects of this curse, for that empire sensibly declined ever after.

Now from all this we learn, (1.) That the heart of kings is in the hand of God, and he turns it which way soever he pleaseth; what they are he makes them to be, for he is *King of kings*. (2.) That when God's time is come for the accomplishing of his gracious purposes concerning his church, he will raise up instruments to do it, from whom such good service was not expected. *The earth sometimes helpeth the woman*, Rev. xi. 16. and those are made use of for the defence of religion that have little religion themselves. (3.) That what is intended for the prejudice of the church, has oft, by the over-ruling providence of God, been made serviceable to it, *Phil. i. 12*. The enemies of the Jews, in appealing to Darius, hoped to get an order to suppress them, but instead of that, got an order to supply them. Thus *out of the eater comes forth meat*. The apocryphal Esdras (or Ezra) Book I. chap. iii. and iv. gives another account of this decree, in favour of the Jews, that Darius had vowed if ever he came to the kingdom, he would build the temple at Jerusalem, and that Zerubbabel, who was one of his attendants, (whereas it is plain, here he was now at Jerusalem) for making an ingenious discourse before him, on that subject [*Great is the truth and will prevail*] was bid to ask what recompence he would, and asked only for this order, in pursuance of the king's vow.

13. ¶ Then Tatnai, governour on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily. 14. And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo; and they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. 15. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. 16. ¶ And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, 17. And offered at the dedication of this house of God, an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. 18. And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses. 19. And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. 20. For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them *were* pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. 21. And the children of Israel which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them, from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat. 22. And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Here we have,

1. The Jews enemies made their friends: When they received this order from the king, they came with as much haste to encourage and assist the work, as their predecessors had to put a stop to it, chap. iv. 23. What the king ordered they did, and because they would not be thought to do it with reluctance, they *did it speedily*, ver. 13. The king's moderation made them contrary to their own inclination, moderate too.

2. The building of the temple carried on and finished in a little time, ver. 14, 15. Now the *elders of the Jews builded* with cheerfulness. For ought I know, the elders themselves laboured at it *with their own hands*, and if they did, it was no disparagement to their eldership, but an encouragement to the other workmen. (1.) They found themselves bound to it *by the commandment of the God of Israel*, who had given them power, that they might use it in his service. (2.) They found themselves shamed into it by the commandment of the heathen kings, Cyrus



Cyrus formerly, Darius now, and Artaxerxes some time after. Can the elders of the Jews be remiss in this good work, when these foreign princes appear so warm in it? Shall native Israelites grudge their pains and care about this building, when strangers grudge not to be at the expence of it? (3.) They found themselves encouraged in it by the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, who, it is likely, represented to them (as bishop Patrick suggests) the wonderful goodness of God, in inclining the heart of the king of Persia to favour them thus. And now the work went on so prosperously, that in four years time it was brought to perfection. *As for God, his work is perfect.* The gospel church, that spiritual temple, is long in the building, but it will be finished at last, when the mystical body is compleated. Every believer is a *living temple, building up himself in his most holy faith*; much opposition is given to this work by Satan and our own corruptions; we trifle and proceed in it with many stops and pauses, but he that has begun the good work will see it performed, and will bring forth judgment unto victory. *Spirits of just men will be made perfect.*

3. The dedication of the temple. When it was built, being designed only for sacred uses, now they shewed by an example how it should be used, which (saith bishop Patrick) is the proper sense of the word *dedicate*. They entred upon it with solemnity, and probably with a publick declaration of the separating of it from common uses, and the surrender of it to the honour of God, to be employed in his worship. (1.) The persons employed in this service were not only the priests and Levites who officiated, but the children of Israel, some of each of the twelve tribes, tho' Judah and Benjamin were the chief, and the rest of the children of the captivity or transportation; which intimates, that there were many besides the children of Israel, of other nations, who transported themselves with them, and became proselytes to their religion. unless we read it, *even the remnant of the children of the captivity*, and then, we may suppose, notice is hereby taken of their mean and afflicted condition, because the consideration of that, helped to make them devout and serious in this and other religious exercises. A sad change! The children of Israel are become children of the captivity, and there appears but a remnant of them neither; according to that prediction, *Isa. vii. 3. Shear-jashub, The remnant shall return.* (2.) The sacrifices that were offered upon this occasion, were *bullocks, rams, and lambs*, ver. 17. for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, nothing for number, in comparison with what had been offered at the dedication of Solomon's temple, but being according to their present ability, it was accepted, for after a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality, 2 Cor. viii. 2. These hundreds were more to them, than Solomon's thousands were to him. But, besides these, they offered twelve he-goats for sin-offerings, one for every tribe, to make atonement for their sins, which they looked upon as necessary, in order to the acceptance of their services. Thus by getting iniquity taken away, they would free themselves from that which had been the sting of their late troubles, and, if not removed, would be a worm at the root of their present comforts. (3.) This service was performed with joy; they were all glad to see the temple built, and the concerns of it in so good a posture. Let us learn to welcome holy ordinances with joy, and attend on them with pleasure. Serve the Lord with gladness. Whatever we dedicate to God, let it be done with joy, that he will please to accept of it. (4.) When they dedicated the house, they settled the household; small comfort could they have in the temple, without the temple-service; and therefore they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, ver. 18. Having set up the worship of God in this dedication, they took care to keep it up, and made the book of Moses their rule, to which they had an eye in this establishment. Tho' the temple-service could not now be performed with so much pomp and plenty as formerly, because of their poverty, yet perhaps it was performed with as much purity, and close adherence to the divine institution as ever, which was the true glory of it. No beauty like the beauty of holiness.

4. The celebration of the passover in the new erected temple. Now they were newly delivered out of their bondage in Babylon, it was seasonable to commemorate their deliverance out of their bondage in Egypt. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies. We may suppose, they had kept the passover after a sort, every year since their return, for they had an altar and a tabernacle. But they were liable to frequent disturbances from their enemies, were straitned for room, and had not conveniences about them, so that they could not do it with due solemnity, till the temple was built, and now they made a joyful festival of it, it falling out in the next month after the temple was finished and dedicated, ver. 19.

Notice is here taken, (1.) Of the purity of the priests and Levites that killed the passover, ver. 20. In Hezekiah's time, they were many of them under blame for not purifying themselves. But now it is observed to their praise, that they were purified together, as one man, so the word is, they were unanimous both in their resolutions, and in their endeavours; to make and keep themselves ceremonially clean for this solemnity; they joined together in their preparations, that they might help one another, so that all of them were pure to a man: The purity of ministers, adds much to the beauty of their ministrations, so doth

their unity. (2.) Of the proselytes that communicated with them in this ordinance. *All such as had separated themselves unto them*, had left their country and the superstitions of it, and cast in their lot with the Israel of God, and had turned from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, both their idolatries and their immoralities; to seek the Lord God of Israel, as their God, did eat the passover. See how the proselytes, the converts, are described; they separate themselves from the filthiness of sin, and fellowship with sinners, join themselves to the Israel of God in conformity and communion, and set themselves to seek the God of Israel; and those that do so in sincerity, tho' strangers and foreigners, are welcome to eat of the gospel feast, as fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. (3.) Of the great pleasure and satisfaction wherewith they kept the feast of unleavened bread, ver. 22: the Lord had made them joyful, had given them both cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice. It was now about twenty years since the foundation of this temple was laid, and we may suppose the old men that then wept at the remembrance of the first temple, were most of them dead by this time, so that now there was no tears mingled with their joys. Those that are upon good grounds joyful, have therefore reason to be thankful, because it is God that makes them to rejoice. He is the fountain whence all the streams of our joy flow. God has promised to all those who take hold of his covenant, that he will make them joyful in his house of prayer. The particular occasion they had for joy at this time was, that God had turned the heart of the emperor to them; to strengthen their hands. If those that have been, or we feared would have been, against us prove to be for us, we may rejoice in it as a token for good, that our ways please the Lord, Prov. xvi. 7. and he must have the glory of it.

## C H A P. VII.

Ezra's precious name saluted us at first in the title of the book, but in the history, we have not met with it, till this chapter introduceth him into publick action, in another reign, that of Artaxerxes. Zerubbabel and Jeshua, we well suppose by this time to be gone old; if not gone off; nor hear we any more of Haggai and Zechariah; they have finished their testimony: What shall become of the cause of God and Israel, when these useful instruments are laid aside? Trust God, who has the residue of the spirit, to raise up others in their room. Ezra here, and Nehemiah in the next book, are as serviceable in their days, as those were in theirs. Here is, (1.) An account in general of Ezra himself, and of his expedition to Jerusalem for the publick good, ver. 1—10. (2.) A copy of the commission which Artaxerxes gave him, ver. 11—26. (3.) His thankfulness to God for it, ver. 27, 28. The next chapter will give us a more particular narrative of his associates, his journey, and arrival at Jerusalem.

1. NOW after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiyah, 2. The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, 3. The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, 4. The son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, 5. The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: 6. This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. 7. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. 8. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month, came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Here is, 1. Ezra's pedigree. He was one of the sons of Aaron, a priest; him God chose to be an instrument of good to Israel, that he might put honour upon the priesthood, the glory of which had been much eclipsed by the captivity. He is said to be the son of Seraiah, that Seraiah, as is supposed, whom the king of Babylon put to death, when he sacked Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxv. 18, 21. If we take the shortest computation, it was seventy-five years since Seraiah died, and many reckon it much longer, and because we will suppose Ezra called out in the prime of his time to publick service, do therefore think that Seraiah was not his immediate parent, but his grand-father or great-grand-father, but he was the first



first eminent person that occurred in his genealogy upwards, which is carried up here as high as Aaron, but leaving out many for brevity sake, which may be supplied from 1 Chron. vi. 4, &c. He was younger brother, or his father was Jozadak, the father of Jeshua, so that he was not high-priest, but nearly allied to the high-priest.

2. His character; tho' of the younger house, his personal qualifications made him very eminent.

1. He was a man of great learning. A scribe, a *ready scribe in the law of Moses*, ver. 6. He was very much conversant with the scriptures, especially the writings of Moses, had the words ready, and was well acquainted with the sense and meaning of them; it is to be feared, learning run low among the Jews in Babylon; but Ezra was instrumental to revive it. The Jews say, he collected and collated all the copies of the law he could find out, and published an accurate edition of it, with all the prophetic books; historical and poetical, that were given by divine inspiration, and so made up the canon of the Old Testament, with the addition of the prophecies and histories of his own time, which, if he were raised up of God, and spirited to do, all generations have reason to call him blessed, and to bless God for him. God sent to the Jews *prophets and scribes*, Mat. xxiii. 34. Ezra went under the latter denomination; now prophecy was about to cease, it was time to promote scripture-knowledge, pursuant to the counsel of God by the last of the prophets, *Mal. iv. 4. Remember the law of Moses*. Gospel ministers are called *Scribes instructed to the kingdom of heaven*, Mat. xiii. 52. New Testament scribes. It was pity such a worthy name as this should be worn as it was, in the degenerate ages of the Jewish church, by men that were professed enemies to Christ and his gospel, *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees*, who were learned in the letter of the law, but strangers to the spirit of it.

2. He was a man of great piety and holy zeal, ver. 10. *He had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, &c.* (1.) That which he chose for his study was *the law of the Lord*. The Chaldeans, among whom he was born and bred, were famed for literature, especially the study of the stars, to which, being a bookish man, we may suppose Ezra was tempted to apply himself, but he got over the temptation, the law of his God was more to him, than all the writings of their magicians and astrologers, which he knew enough of, with good reason to despise them. (2.) He *sought the law of the Lord*, i. e. he made it his business to enquire into it; searched the scriptures, and sought the knowledge of God, and his mind and will in the scriptures, which is to be found there, but not without seeking. (3.) He made conscience of doing according to it; set it before him as his rule, formed his sentiments and temper by it, and managed himself in his whole conversation according to it. This use we must make of our knowledge of the scriptures, for happy are we, if we do what we know of the will of God. (4.) He set himself to teach Israel the statutes and judgments of that law. What he knew, he was willing to communicate for the good of others, for *the ministration of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal*. But observe the method; he first learned and then taught; sought the law of the Lord, and so laid up a good treasure, and then instructed others, and laid out what he had laid up. He also first did and then taught, practised the commandments himself, and then directed others in the practice of them; thus his example confirmed his doctrine. (5.) He prepared his heart to do all this; or fixed his heart. He took pains in his studies, and thoroughly furnished himself for what he designed, and then put on resolution to proceed and persevere in them, and thus he became a ready scribe. Moses in Egypt, Ezra in Babylon, and both in captivity, were wonderfully fitted for eminent services to the church.

3. His expedition to Jerusalem for the good of his country. He *went up from Babylon*, ver. 6. and in four months time came to Jerusalem, ver. 8. It was strange such a man as he staid so long in Babylon, after his brethren were gone up; but God sent him not thither, till he had work for him to do there; and none went, but those *whose spirits God raised* to go up. Some think this Artaxerxes was the same with that Darius, whose decree we had, chap. vi. and that Ezra came the very year after the temple was finished, that was the sixth year, this the seventh, ver. 8. So Dr Lightfoot; my worthy and learned friend lately deceased, Mr Tallents in his chronological tables, placeth it about fifty-seven years after the finishing of the temple; others further on. I have only to observe, (1.) How kind the king was to him, he *granted him all his request*, whatever he desired, to put him into a capacity to serve his country. (2.) How kind his people were to him; when he went, many more went with him, because they desired not to stay in Babylon when he was gone thence, and because they would venture to dwell in Jerusalem, when he was gone thither. (3.) How kind his God was to him; he obtained this favour from his king and country, by *the good hand of the Lord that was upon him*, ver. 6, 9. Note, Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, and from him our judgment proceeds; as the events that shall be we must see in God's hand; so the events that are, we must see God's hand in, and acknowledging him with thankfulness, when we have reason to call it his good hand.

11. ¶ Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. 12. Artaxerxes king of kings, Unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time. 13. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests, and Levites in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. 14. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand: 15. And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem. 16. And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the free-will offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God, which is in Jerusalem: 17. That thou mayest buy speedily with this money, bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat-offerings, and their drink-offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God, which is in Jerusalem. 18. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and gold, that do after the will of your God. 19. The vessels also that are given thee, for the service of the house of thy God, *those* deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. 20. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the kings treasure-house. 21. And I, *even* I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily; 22. Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oyl, and salt without prescribing *how much*. 23. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? 24. Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests, and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom upon them. 25. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach ye them that know *them* not. 26. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

We have here the commission which the Persian emperor granted to Ezra, giving him authority to act for the good of the Jews; and it is very ample and full, and beyond what could be expected. The commission runs, we suppose, in the usual form. Artaxerxes, *king of kings*, that is too high a title for any mortal man to assume; he was indeed king of some kings, but to speak as if he were king of all kings, is to usurp his prerogative, who hath *all power both in heaven and in earth*. He sends greeting to his trusty and well beloved Ezra, whom he calls a *scribe of the law of the God of heaven*, ver. 12. a title which (it seems by this) Ezra valued himself by, and desired no other, no not when he was advanced to the proconsular dignity. He reckoned it more his honour to be a *scribe of God's law*, than to be a peer or prince of the empire: Let us observe the articles of this commission;

1. He gives Ezra leave to go up to Jerusalem, and as many of his countrymen as pleased to go up with him, ver. 13. He and they were captives, and therefore they would not quit his dominions without his royal licence.

2. He gives him authority to enquire into the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 14. The rule of his enquiry, was to be *the law of his God which was in his hand*; whether the Jews in their religion had and did according to that law; whether the temple was built, the priesthood settled, and the sacrifices offered conformable to the divine appointment; if upon enquiry he found any thing amiss, he must see to get it amended, and, like Titus in Crete, must *set in order the things that were wanting*, Tit. i. 5. Thus is God's law magnified and made honourable, and thus are the Jews restored to their antient privilege of governing themselves by



by that law, and are no longer under *the statutes that were not good*, the statutes of their oppressors, *Ezek. xx. 25*.

3. He intrusts him with the money that was freely given by the king himself and his counsellors, and collected among his subjects for the service of the house of God, *ver. 15, 16*. Let this be taken notice of, (1.) To the honour of God, as the one only living and true God, for even those that worshipped other gods, were so convinced of the sovereignty of the God of Israel, that they were willing to be at charge to recommend themselves to his favour. See *Psal. xlv. 12.—lxviii. 29*. (2.) To the praise of this heathen king; that he honoured the God of Israel, tho' his worshippers were a despicable handful of poor men, that were not able to bear the charges of their own religion, and were now his vassals; and that tho' he was not wrought upon to quit his own superstitions, yet he protected and encouraged the Jews in their religion, and did not only say, *Be ye warmed, and be ye filled*, but gave them such things as they needed. (3.) To the reproach of the memory of the wicked kings of Judah; they that had been trained up in the knowledge and worship of the God of Israel, and had his law, and his prophets, oft plundered and impoverished the temple, but here a heathen prince enricheth it. Thus afterwards the gospel was rejected by the Jews, but welcomed by the Gentiles. See *Rom. xi. 11*. *Through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles*, *Acts xiii. 46*.

Ezra is intrusted, (1.) To receive this money, and to carry it to Jerusalem, for he was a man of known integrity, whom they could confide in, that he would not convert that, nor the least part of it to his own use, which was given to the publick. We find St Paul going to Jerusalem upon such an errand, *to bring alms to his nation, and offerings*, *Acts xxiv. 17*. (2.) To lay out this money in the best manner; in sacrifices to be offered upon the altar of God, *ver. 17*. and in whatever else he or his brethren thought fit, *ver. 18*. with this limitation only, that it be *after the will of your God*, which they were better acquainted with than he was. Let the will of our God be always our rule in our expences, and particularly in what we lay out for his service. God's work must always be done according to his will. Besides money, he had vessels also given him *for the service of the temple*, *ver. 19*. Cyrus restored what of right belonged to the temple; but these were given over and above: Thus it *receiveth its own with usury*; these he must deliver before the God of Jerusalem, as intended for his honour, there where he had put his name.

4. He draws him a bill, or warrant rather, upon the *treasurers on that side the river*, requiring them to furnish him with what he had occasion for out of the king's revenues, and place it to the king's account, *ver. 20, 21, 22*. This was considerably done, for Ezra, being yet to enquire into the state of things, knew not what he should have occasion for, and was modest in his demands; it was also kindly done, and evidenceth a very great affection to the temple, and a great confidence in Ezra. It is the interest of princes and great men to use their wealth and power, for the support and encouragement of religion: And what else are great revenues good for, but that they enable men to do much good of this kind, if they have but hearts to do it?

5. He chargeth him that nothing should be wanting, that was requisite to be done in or about the temple, for the honour of the God of Israel. Observe in this charge, *ver. 23*. How honourably he speaks of God, he had called him before, *the God of Jerusalem*; but here, lest it should be thought he looked upon him as a local deity, he calls him twice with great veneration *the God of heaven*: How strictly he eyes the word and law of God, which, it is likely, he had read and admired; whatsoever is *commanded by your God* (whose institutions, tho' he wrote himself *king of kings*, he would not presume in the least iota, or tittle, to alter or add to) let it be done, let it be diligently done, with care and speed. And how solicitously he deprecates the wrath of God, *why should there be wrath against the realm?* The neglect and contempt of religion brings the judgments of God upon kings and kingdoms, and the likeliest expedient to turn away his wrath, when it is ready to break out against a people, is to support and encourage religion; would we secure our peace and prosperity, let us take care that the cause of God be not starved.

6. He dischargeth all the ministers of the temple from paying taxes to the government, from the greatest of the priests to the least of the Nethinims, it shall not be lawful for the king's officers to impose that toll, tribute, or custom upon them, which other the king's subjects paid, *ver. 24*. This put a great honour upon them, as free denizens of the empire, and would gain them respect as favourites of the crown: and it gave them liberty to attend their ministry with more cheerfulness, and freedom. We suppose it was only what they needed for themselves and their families, and the maintenance of their ministry, that was hereby allowed to come to them custom-free; if any of them should take occasion from this privilege to meddle in trade and merchandise, they justly lost the benefit of it.

7. He empowers Ezra to nominate and appoint judges and magistrates, for all the Jews on that side the river, *ver. 25, 26*. It was a great favour to the Jews to have such nobles of themselves, and especially to have them of Ezra's nomination. (1.) All that *knew the laws of Ezra's God*, i. e. all that professed the Jewish religion were to be under the jurisdiction of these judges, which

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intimates, that they were exempted from the jurisdiction of the heathen magistrates. (2.) These judges were allowed and encouraged to make profelytes, let them *teach the laws of God to those that do not know them*. Tho' he would not turn Jew himself, he cared not how many of his subjects did. (3.) They are authorized to enforce the judgments they gave, and the orders they made conformable to *the law of God*, (which was hereby made the *law of the king*) with severe penalties, imprisonment, banishment, fine, or death, according as their law directed. They are not allowed to make new laws, but must see the laws of God duly executed; and therefore they are intrusted with the sword, that they may be *a terror to evil doers*. What could Jehoshaphat, or Hezekiah, or David himself as king, have done more for the honour of God and the furtherance of religion!

27. ¶ Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD, which is in Jerusalem: 28. And hath extended mercy unto me, before the king and his counsellors, and before all the kings mighty princes: and I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel, chief men to go up with me.

Ezra cannot proceed in this story, without inserting this thankful acknowledgment of the goodness of God, to him and his people in this matter. As soon as he has concluded the king's commission, instead of subjoining *God save the king*, tho' that had been proper enough; he adds, *Blessed be the Lord*, for we must *in every thing give thanks*, and whatever occurrences please us, we must own God's hand in them, and praise his name. Two things Ezra blessed God for,

1. For his commission, we suppose he kissed the king's hand for it, but that was not all, *Blessed be God* (saith he) *that put such a thing as this into the king's heart*. God can put things into mens hearts, which would not arise there of themselves, and into their heads too, both by his providence and by his grace, in things *pertaining both to life and godliness*. If any good appear to be in our own hearts, or in the hearts of others, we must own it was God that put it there, and bless him for it; for it is he that *worketh in us both to will and to do that which is good*. When princes and magistrates act for the suppression of vice, and the encouragement of religion, we must thank God that *put it into their hearts* to do so, as much as if they had granted us some particular favour. When God's house was built, Ezra rejoiced in what was done to beautify it. We read not of any orders given to paint, or gild it, or garnish it with precious stones, but to be sure that the ordinances of God were duly administered there constantly, and carefully and exactly according to the institution, and that was indeed the beautifying of the temple.

2. For the encouragement he had to act in pursuance of his commission, *ver. 28*. He has *extended mercy to me*. The king, in the honour he did him, we may suppose had an eye to his merits, and preferred him because he looked upon him to be a very sensible, ingenious man: but he himself ascribes it purely to God's mercy, that it was it that recommended him to the favour of his prince. Ezra himself was a man of courage, yet he attributes his encouragement, not to his own heart, but to God's hand, *I was strengthened to undertake the services, as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me*, to direct and support me; if God gives us his hand, we are bold and cheerful; if he withdraw it, we are weak as water. Whatever service we are enabled to do for God and our generation, God must have all the glory of it. Strength for it is derived from him, and therefore the praise of it must be given to him.

### C H A P. VIII.

This chapter gives us a more particular narrative of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem, which we had a general account of in the foregoing chapter. (1.) The company that went up with him, *ver. 1—20*. (2.) The solemn fast which he kept with his company, to implore God's presence with them in this journey, *ver. 21—23*. (3.) The care he took of the treasure he had with him, and the charge he gave the priests concerning it to whose custody he committed it, *ver. 24—30*. (4.) The care God took of him and his company in the way, *ver. 31*. (5.) Their safe arrival at Jerusalem, where they delivered their treasure to the priests, *ver. 33, 34*. their commissions to the king's lieutenants, *ver. 36*. offered sacrifices to God, *ver. 35*. and then applied themselves to their business.

1. **T**HESE are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. 2. Of the sons of Phinehas; Geršom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush. 3. Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharoah; Zechariah:



Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males, an hundred and fifty. 4. Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerariah, and with him two hundred males. 5. Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. 6. Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. 7. And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. 8. And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males. 9. Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. 10. And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males. 11. And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. 12. And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males. 13. And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. 14. Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males. 15. ¶ And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. 16. Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding. 17. And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief, at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God. 18. And by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel, and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; 19. And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; 20. Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name.

Ezra having received his commission from the king, beats for volunteers, as it were, sets up an ensign to assemble the out-casts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah, *Isa. xi.* 12. whoever of the sons of Sion, that dwell with the daughters of Babylon, is disposed to go to Jerusalem, now the temple there is finished, and the temple-service set a-going, now is their time; now one would think that under such a leader, with such encouragements, all the Jews should at length have shaken themselves from their dust, and loosed the bands of their neck, according to that call, *Isa. lii.* 1, 2, &c. I wonder how any of them could read that chapter, and yet stay behind. But multitudes did that loved their ease, better than their religion, thought themselves well where they were, and either believe not that Jerusalem would better their condition, or durst not go thither through any difficulties. But here we are told,

1. That some offered themselves willingly to go with Ezra. The heads of the several families are here named, for their honour, and the numbers of the males that each brought in, amounting in all to one thousand four hundred ninety and six. Two priests are named, *ver. 2.* and one of the sons of David, but it should seem they came without their families, probably intending to see how they liked Jerusalem, and then either to send for their families; or return to them as they saw cause. Several of their families, or clans, here named we had before, *chap. 2.* Then some went up from them, now more, as God inclined their hearts; some were called into the vineyard at the third hour, others not till the eleventh, yet even those were not rejected. But here we read of the last sons of Adonikam, *ver. 13.* which some understand to their dispraise, that they were the last that lifted themselves under Ezra, I rather understand it to their honour, that now all the sons of that family returned, and none staid behind.

2. That what Levites went in this company were in a manner pressed into the service, Ezra appointed a general rendezvous of all his company, at a certain place upon New-years-day, the first day of the first month, *chap. vii.* 9. then and there he took a view of them, and mustered them, and (which was strange) found there none of the sons of Levi, *ver. 17.* Some priests they were, but none other that were Levites, where was the spirit of that sacred tribe! Ezra, a priest like Moses, proclaims *who is on*

*the Lord's side?* and they, unlike to Levi, shrink, and desire to abide among the sheep-folds to hear the bleatings of the flock; synagogues, we suppose, they had in Babylon, in which they prayed and preached, and kept sabbaths, and when they could not have better, they had reason to be thankful for them: but now the temple at Jerusalem was opened, to the service of which they were ordained, they ought to have preferred the gates of Sion, before all those synagogues; it is upon record here to their reproach, but *tell it not in Gath.* Ezra, when he observed that he had no Levites in his retinue, was much at a loss: he had money enough for the service of the temple, but wanted men. The king and princes had more than done their part, but the sons of Levi had not half done theirs. Eleven men, chief men, and men of understanding he chooses out of his company, to be employed for the filling up of this lamentable vacancy. And here we are told;

1. How well they were sent; that Ezra sent them to a proper place, where there was a college of Levites, the place Casiphia, probably a street or square in Babylon, allowed for that purpose; (Silver-street, one may call it, for Ceph signifies silver) he sent them to a proper person, to Iddo, the chief president of the college, not to urge him to come himself, we will suppose him to be old, and unfit for such a remove, but to send some of the juniors, *ministers for the house of our God, ver. 17.* The furnishing of God's house with good ministers is a good work; and which will redound to the comfort and credit of all that have any hand in it.

2. How well they sped; they did not return without their errand, but tho' the warning was short, they brought about 40 Levites to attend Ezra, Sherebiah noted for a very intelligent man, and eighteen with him, *ver. 18.* Hashabiah and Jeshaiah, and twenty with them, *ver. 19.* By this it appears they were not averse to go, but were slothful and mindless, and only wanted to be called upon and excited to go? What pity is it that good men should omit a good work, merely for want of being spoken to; pity they should need it, and, if they do, pity they should want it. Of the Nethinims, the servitors of the sacred college, the *species infima* of the temple-ministers, more appeared forward to go than of the Levites themselves: of them two hundred and twenty upon this hasty summons listed themselves, and had the honour to be expressed by name in Ezra's muster-roll, *ver. 20.* Thus (saith Ezra) were we furnished with Levites, *by the good hand of our God upon us.* If where ministers have been wanting, the vacancies are well supplied, let God have the glory, and his good hand, qualifying them for the service, inclining them to it, and then opening a door of opportunity for them.

21. ¶ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might afflict our selves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good, that seek him, but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23. So we fasted, and besought our God for this, and he was intreated of us.

Ezra has procured Levites to go along with him, but what will that avail, unless he have God with him? That is therefore his chief care; in all our ways we must acknowledge God, and in these particularly wherein we are endeavouring to serve the interest of his kingdom among men, Ezra doth so here. Observe,

1. The steadfast confidence he had in God, and in his gracious protection; he told the king, (*ver. 22.*) what principles he went upon, that those who seek God are safe under the shadow of his wings, even in their greatest dangers: but those who forsake him are continually exposed, even then when they are most secure, God's servants have his power engaged for them, his enemies have it engaged against them. This Ezra believed with his heart, and with his mouth made confession of it before the king, and therefore he was ashamed to ask of the king a convoy, lest thereby he should give occasion to the king, and those about him, to suspect either God's power to help his people, or Ezra's confidence in that power. They that trust in God, and triumph in him, will be ashamed of seeking to the creature for protection, especially for using any sorry shifts for their own safety, because thereby they contradict themselves, and their own confidence. Not but that those who depend upon God, must use proper means for their preservation, and they need not be ashamed to do it; but when the honour of God is concerned, one would rather expose ones self, than do any thing to the prejudice of that, which ought to be dearer to us than our lives.

2. The solemn application he made to God in that confidence, he proclaimed a fast, *ver. 21.* No doubt, he had himself begged of God direction in this affair, from the first time he had it in his thoughts: but for publick mercies, publick prayers must be made; that all who are to share in the comfort of it, may join in request for it. Their fasting was, (1.) To express their humiliation; this he declares to be the intent and meaning of it, that we might afflict



*afflict ourselves before our God* for our sins, and so be qualified for the pardon of them; when we are entering upon any new condition of life, our care should be to bring none of the guilt of the sins of our former condition into it; when we are in any imminent peril, let us be sure to make our peace with God, and then we are safe, nothing can do us any real hurt. (2.) To excite their supplications; prayer was always joined with religious fasting; their errand to the throne of grace was *to seek of God a right way*, i. e. to commit themselves to the conduct of the divine providence, to put themselves under the divine protection, and to beg of God to guide and keep them in their journey, and bring them safely to their journey's end. They were strangers in the road, were to march through their enemies' countries, and had not a pillar of cloud and fire to lead them as their fathers had, but they believed the power and favour of God, and the ministration of his angels would be to them instead of that, and hoped by prayer to engage this for them. Note, All our concerns about ourselves, our families, and our estates, it is our wisdom and duty by prayer to commit to God, and leave the care of them with him, *Phil. iv. 6.*

3. The good success of their doing so, *ver. 23. we besought our God by joint prayer, and he was entreated of us*; they had some comfortable assurance in their own minds, that their prayers were answered, and the event declared it, for never any that sought God in earnest sought him in vain.

24. ¶ Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them. 25. And weighed unto them the silver and the gold, and the vessels, *even the offering of the house of our God, which the king and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered.* 26. I even weighed unto their hand, six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, *and of gold an hundred talents*: 27. Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams, and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. 28. And I said unto them, *ye are holy unto the LORD, the vessels are holy also, and the silver and the gold are a free will offering unto the LORD God of your fathers.* 29. Watch ye, and keep them until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests, and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD. 30. So took the priests and the Levites, the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

We have here an account of the particular care, which Ezra took of the treasure he had with him that belonged to God's sanctuary. Observe, (1.) Having committed the keeping of it to God, he committed the keeping of it to proper men, whose business it must be to watch it: tho' without God they *wake in vain*. Note, Our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours; the care of Christ's gospel, his church and ordinances, must not be so left with him, but that it must also be committed to faithful men, *2 Tim. ii. 2.* (2.) Having prayed to God to preserve all the substance they had with them, he shews himself especially solicitous for that part of it which belonged to the house of God, and was an offering to him. Do we expect God should by his providence keep that which belongs to us, let us by his grace keep that which belongs to him; let God's honour and interest be our care, and then we may expect that our lives and comforts will be his.

Observe, 1. The persons to whom he delivered the offerings of the house of God. Twelve chief priests, and as many Levites, he appointed to this trust, *ver. 24, 30.* who were bound by their office to take care of the things of God, and were in a particular manner to have the benefit of these sacred treasures. Ezra tells them why he put those things into their hands, *ver. 28. ye are holy unto the Lord, the vessels are holy also*, and who so fit to take care of holy things as holy persons? Those that have the dignity and honour of the priesthood, must take along with it the trust and duty of it. The prophet is foretelling the return of God's people and ministers out of Babylon, when he gives that solemn charge, *Isa. lii. 11. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.*

2. The great exactness with which he lodged this trust in their hands, he weighed to them the silver, the gold, and the vessels, *ver. 25.* because he expected to have it from them again by weight. In all trusts, but especially sacred ones, we ought to be punctual, and preserve a right understanding on both sides. In Zerubbabel's time the vessels were delivered by number; here by weight, that all might be forth coming, and it might easily appear if any were missing; to intimate, that such as are intrusted with holy things, (as all the stewards of the mysteries of God are) are concerned to remember, both in receiving their trust, and in discharging it, that they must shortly give a very particular account of it, that they may be faithful to it, and so give up their account with joy.

3. The charge he gave them with these treasures, *ver. 29. watch ye and keep them*, that they be not lost or embezzled, or mingled with the other carriages, keep them together, keep them by themselves, keep them safe, till you weigh them in the temple, before the great men there; hereby intimating how much it was their concern to be careful and faithful, and would be their honour to be found so. Thus when St Paul chargeth Timothy with the gospel treasure, he bids him keep it *until the appearing of Jesus Christ*, and his appearing before him to give account of his trust, when his fidelity would be his crown.

31. ¶ Then we departed from the river of Ahava, on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. 32. And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. 33. ¶ Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold, and the vessels weighed in the house of our God, by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas, and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites: 34. By number, and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time. 35. Also the children of those that had been carried away which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt-offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks, for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he-goats for a sin offering: *all this was a burnt-offering unto the LORD.* 36. ¶ And they delivered the kings commissions unto the kings lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river, and they furthered the people, and the house of God.

We are now to attend Ezra to Jerusalem, a journey of about four months in all, but his multitude made his marches slow, and his stages short: Now here we are told,

1. That his God was good, and he owns it; *the hand of our God was upon us*, to spirit us for our undertaking, and to him they owed it. (1.) That they were preserved in their journey, and not all cut off, for there were enemies that *laid wait for them by the way* to do them a mischief, and, at least, like Amalek to *smite the hindmost of them*, but God protected them, *ver. 31.* Even the common perils of journies, are such as oblige us to sanctify our going out with prayer, and our returns in peace with praise and thanksgiving; much more ought God to be thus eyed in such a dangerous expedition as this was. (2.) That they were brought in safety to their journey's end, *ver. 32.* Let them that have steadfastly set their faces towards the new Jerusalem proceed and persevere to the end, *till they appear before God in Zion*, and they shall find he *that has begun the good work will perform it.*

2. That his treasurers were faithful; when they were come to Jerusalem they were impatient to be discharged of their trust, and therefore applied themselves to the great men of the temple who received it from them, and gave them an acquittance in full, *ver. 33, 34.* It is a great ease to one's mind to be discharged from a trust; and a great honour to one's name, to be able to make it appear that it hath been faithfully discharged.

3. That his companions were devout; as soon as they came to be near the altar, they thought themselves obliged to offer sacrifice, whatever they had done in Babylon, *ver. 35.* that will be dispensed with when we want opportunity, which when the door is opened again will be expected from us. It is observable, (1.) That among their sacrifices they had a sin-offering: for it is the atonement that sweetens and secures every mercy to us, which will not be truly comfortable, unless *iniquity be taken away*, and our peace made with God. (2.) That the number of their offerings related to the number of the tribes, twelve bullocks, twelve he-goats, and rams ninety six, eight times twelve. Hereby signifying the union of the two kingdoms, according to what was foretold, *Ezek. xxxvii. 22.* They did not any longer go two tribes one way, and ten another, but all the twelve met by their representatives at the same altar.

4. That even the enemies of the Jews, became their friends, vailed to Ezra's commission, and instead of hindering the people of God furthered them, *ver. 36.* purely in complaisance to the king, when he appeared moderate, they all coveted to appear so too. *Then had the churches rest.*



## C H A P. IX.

*The affairs of the church were in a good posture, we may well suppose, now Ezra presided in them; look without, the government was kind to them, we hear no complaints of persecution and oppression, their enemies had either their hearts turned, or at least their hands tied; their neighbours were civil, and we hear of no wars or rumours of wars; none to make them afraid; all was well as could be, considering that they were few and poor, and subjects to a foreign prince: look at home, and we hear nothing of Baal or Ashtaroth, or Moloch, no images or groves, or golden-calves, no nor so much as high-places, not only no idolatrous altars, but no separate ones, but the temple duly respected, and the temple service carefully kept up: and yet all was not well neither, the purest ages of the church have had some corruptions, and it will never be presented without spot or wrinkle, till it is a glorious church, a church triumphant, Eph. v. 27. We have here, (1.) A complaint brought to Ezra of the many marriages that had been made with strange wives, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The great trouble which he, and others influenced by his example, were in upon this information, ver. 3, 4. (3.) The solemn confession which he made of this sin to God with godly sorrow and shame, ver. 5—15.*

1. **N**OW when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, the people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea the hand of the princes, and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. 3. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and pluckt off the hair of my head, and of my beard, and sat down astonished. 4. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

Ezra, like Barnabas, when he came to Jerusalem, and saw the grace of God to his brethren there, no doubt was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart, they would cleave to the Lord, Acts xi. 23. he saw nothing amiss; many corruptions lurk out of the view of the most vigilant rulers: but here is a damp upon his joys, information is brought him that many of the people, yea and some of the rulers, had married wives out of heathen families, and joined themselves in affinity with strangers.

Observe, 1. What the sin was that they were guilty of, it was mingling themselves with the people of those lands, ver. 2. associating with them both in trade and in conversation, making themselves familiar with them, and, to compleat the affinity, taking their daughters in marriages to their sons; we are willing to hope they did not worship their gods, their captivity had cured them of their idolatry: it is said indeed they did according to their abominations; but that (saith bishop Patrick) here signifies only the imitation of the heathen in promiscuous marriages with any nation whatsoever; which by degrees would lead them to idolatry again. Herein (1.) They disobeyed the express command of God, which forbade all intimacy with the heathen, and particularly in matrimonial contracts, Deut. vii. 3. (2.) They profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and set themselves upon a level with those, above whom God had by singular marks of his favour, of late as well as formerly, dignified them. (3.) They distrusted the power of God to protect and advance them, and were led by carnal policy, hoping to strengthen themselves, and make an interest among their neighbours by these alliances. A practical disbelief of God's all-sufficiency; is at the bottom of all the sorry shifts we make to help our selves. 4. They exposed themselves, and much more their children, to the peril of idolatry, the very sin, and introduced by this very way, that had once been the ruin of their church and nation.

2. Who were the persons that were guilty of this sin, not only some of the unthinking people of Israel that knew no better, but many of the priests and Levites, whose office it was to teach the law, and this law among the rest, and in whom by reason of their elevation above common Israelites, it was a greater crime. It was a diminution to the sins of that tribe to match into any other tribe, and they seldom did, except into the royal tribe, but for them to match with heathen, with Canaanites, and Hittites, and I know not who, was such a disparagement as if they had had any sense tho' not of duty, yet of honour, one would think they should never have been guilty of: yet this was not the worst neither; The hand of the princes and rulers, who by their power should

have prevented or reformed this high misdemeanour, was chief in this trespass. If princes be in a trespass, they will be charged chief in it, because of the influence their example will have upon others; many will follow their pernicious ways. But miserable the case of that people whose leaders debauch them and cause them to err.

3. The information that was given of this to Ezra; it was given by the persons that were most proper to complain, the princes, those of them that had kept their integrity, and with their dignity; they could not have accused others, if they themselves had not been free from blame. It was given to the person that, had power to mend the matter, that as a ready scribe in the law of God, could argue with them, and as king's commissioner could awe them. It is likely, these princes had oft endeavoured to redress this grievance, and could not, but now they applied themselves to Ezra, hoping his wisdom, authority, and interest would prevail to do it. Those that cannot of themselves reform publick abuses, may yet do good service by giving information to those that can.

4. The impression this made upon Ezra. ver. 3. He rent his clothes, plucked off his hair, and sat down astonished. Thus he expressed the deep sense he had, (1.) Of the dishonour hereby done to God. It grieved him to the heart, to think that a people called by his name, should so grossly violate his law, should be so little benefited by his correction, and make such ill returns for his favours. (2.) Of the mischief the people had hereby done to themselves, and the danger they were in of the wrath of God breaking out against them. Note, 1. Other sins should be our sorrow, and the injury done by them to God's honour, and the souls of men is what we should lay to heart. (2.) Sorrow for sin must be great sorrow, such Ezra's was, as for an only son or a first-born. 3. The scandalous sins of professors are what we have reason to be astonished at. We may stand amazed to see men contradict, disparage, prejudice, ruin themselves. Strange, that men should act so inconsiderately, and so inconsistently with themselves, upright men are astonished at it.

5. The influence which Ezra's grief for this had upon others; we may suppose he went up to the house of the Lord, there to humble himself, because he had an eye to God in his grief, and that was the proper place of deprecating his displeasure; publick notice was soon taken of it, and all the devout serious people that were at hand, assembled themselves to him, it should seem of their own accord, for nothing is said of their being sent to; ver. 4. Note, 1. It is the character of good people that they tremble at God's word, they stand in awe of the authority of its precepts, and the severity and justice of its threatenings, and to them that do so will God look, Isa. lxvi. 2. 2. They that tremble at the word of God, cannot but tremble at the sins of men, by which the law of God is broken, and his wrath and curse incurred. 3. The pious zeal of one against sin, may perhaps provoke very many to the like, as the apostle speaks in another case, 2 Cor. ix. 2. Many will follow that have not consideration, conduct, and courage enough, to lead in a good work. 4. All good people ought to own those that appear and act in the cause of God against vice and profaneness, to stand by them, and do what they can to strengthen their hands.

5. ¶ And at the evening sacrifice, I arose up from my heaviness, and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God. 6. And said, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. 7. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day, and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. 8. And now for a little space, grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. 9. For we were bondmen, yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. 10. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, 11. Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land, with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another, with their uncleanness. 12. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither



neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace, or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. 13. And after all that is come upon us, for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and hast given us *such* deliverance as this: 14. Should we again break thy commandments, and joyn in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us, so that *there should be* no remnant nor escaping? 15. O LORD God of Israel, thou *art* righteous, for we remain yet escaped, as *it is* this day: behold, we *are* before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee, because of this.

What the meditations of Ezra's heart were, while for some hours he sat down astonished, we may guess by the words of his mouth, when at length he *spoke with his tongue*; and a most pathetical address he here makes to heaven upon this occasion. Observe,

1. The time when he made this address; *at the evening sacrifice*, ver. 5. Then (it is likely) devout people used to come into the courts of the temple, to grace the solemnity of the sacrifice, and to offer up their own prayers to God in concurrence with it. In their hearing, Ezra chose to make this confession, that they might be made duly sensible of the sins of their people, which hitherto they had either not taken notice of, or had made light of. Prayer may preach. The sacrifice, and especially the evening sacrifice, was a type of the great propitiation, that *blessed lamb of God*, who, *in the evening* of the world, was to *take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, to which we may suppose Ezra had an eye of faith in this penitential address to God; he makes confession with his hand, as it were, upon the head of that great sacrifice, through which *we receive the atonement*. Certainly Ezra was no stranger to the message which the angel Gabriel had some years ago delivered to Daniel, at the time of the evening sacrifice, and as it were in explication of it, concerning Messiah the prince, *Dan. ix. 24.* and perhaps had regard to that in choosing this time.

2. His preparation for this address. (1.) He *rose up from his heaviness*, and so far shook off the burthen of his grief, as was necessary to the lifting up of his heart to God. He recovered himself from his astonishment, got the tumult of his troubled spirits somewhat stilled, and his spirit composed for communion with God. (2.) He *fell upon his knees*, put himself into the posture of a penitent humbling himself, and a petitioner suing for mercy, and in both representing the people for whom he was now an intercessor. (3.) He *spread out his hands*, as one affected with what he was going to say, offering it up unto God, waiting and reaching out, as it were, with an earnest expectation, to receive a gracious answer. And in this, he had an eye to God, as the Lord and his God, a God of power, but a God of grace.

3. The address itself. It is not properly to be called a prayer, for there is not a word of petition in it, but if we give prayer its full latitude, it is the offering up of pious and devout affections to God, and very devout, very pious, are the expressions which Ezra here expresseth. His address is a penitent confession of sin, not his own, from a conscience burthened with its own guilt, and apprehensive of his own danger, but the sin of his people, from a gracious concern for the honour of God, and the welfare of Israel. Here is a lively picture of ingenuous repentance. Observe in this address,

1. The confession he makes of the sin, and the aggravations of it which he insists upon, to affect his own heart, and theirs that joined with him with holy sorrow and shame and fear, in the consideration of it, that they might be deeply humbled for it. And it is observable, tho' he himself were wholly clear from this guilt, yet he puts himself into the number of the sinners, because he was a member of the same community, *our sins, and our trespasss*. Perhaps he now remembered it against himself, as his fault that he had staid so long after his brethren in Babylon, and had not separated himself so soon as he might have done from the people of those lands. When we are lamenting the wickedness of the wicked, it may be if we duly reflect upon ourselves, and give our own hearts leave to deal faithfully with us, we may find something of the same nature, tho' in a lower degree that we also have been guilty of. However he speaks that which was or should have been the general complaint.

(1.) He owns their sins to have been very great, *our iniquities are increased over our heads*, ver. 6. we are ready to perish in them as in deep waters; so general was the prevalency of them, so violent the power of them, and so threatening were they of the most pernicious consequences. Iniquity is grown up to that height among us, that it reaches to the heavens, so very impudent, that it dares heaven, so very provoking, that, like the sin of Sodom, it cries to heaven for vengeance. But let this be the comfort of true penitents, that tho' their sins reach to the heavens, God's mercy is *in the heavens*, *Psal. xxxvi. 5. where sin abounds, grace will much more abound.*

(2.) Their sin had been long persisted in, *ver. 7. since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass*. The example of those that were gone before them, he thought so far from excusing their fault, that it aggravated it; we should take warning not to stumble at the same stone. The corruption is so much the worse, that it has taken deep root, and begins to plead prescription, but by this means we have reason to fear the measure of the iniquity near full.

(3.) The great and sore judgments, which God had brought upon them for their sins, did very much aggravate them. *For our iniquities we have been delivered to the sword and to captivity*, ver. 7. and yet not reformed, yet not reclaimed; brayed in the mortar, and yet the *folly not gone*, *Prov. xxvi. 22.* corrected but not reclaimed.

(4.) The late mercies God had bestowed upon them did likewise very much aggravate their sins. This he insists largely upon; *ver. 8, 9.* Observe, (1.) The time of mercy, *now for a little space*, i. e. It is but a little while since we had our liberty, and it is not likely to continue long. This greatly aggravated their sin, that they were so lately in the furnace and that they knew not how soon they might return to it again, what and yet be secure!

(2.) The fountain of mercy, *grace has been showed us from the Lord*. The kings of Persia were the instruments of their enlargement, but he ascribes it to God, and to his grace, his free grace without any merit of theirs. (3.) The streams of mercy. They were *not forsaken in their bondage*, but even in Babylon had the tokens of God's presence, that they were a remnant of Israelites left, a few out of many, and those narrowly escaped out of the hands of their enemies; by the favour of the kings of Persia: But especially that they had *a nail in his holy place*, i. e. (as it is explained, *ver. 9.*) that they had set up the *house of God*. They had their religion settled, and the service of the temple in a constant method. We are to reckon it a great comfort and advantage, to have stated opportunities of worshipping God. *Blessed are they that dwell in God's house*, like Anna that departed not from the temple; *this is my rest for ever*, saith the gracious soul. (4.) The effects of all this. It enlightened their eyes, and it revived their hearts, i. e. it was very comfortable to them, and the more sensibly so, because it was in their bondage, it was life from the dead to them; tho' but a little reviving; it was a great favour considering that they deserved none, and the day of small things was an earnest of greater. Now (saith Ezra) how ungrateful are we to offend a God that has been so kind to us; how disingenuous to mingle ourselves in sin with those nations from whom we have been in wonderful mercy delivered; how unwise to expose ourselves to God's displeasure when we are tried with the returns of his favour, and are upon our good behaviour for the continuance of it.

(5.) It was a great aggravation of the sin that it was against an express command. *We have forsaken thy commandments*, ver. 10. It seems to have been an antient law of the house of Jacob, not to match with the families of the uncircumcised, *Gen. xxxiv. 14.* But besides that, God had strictly forbidden it. He recites the command, *ver. 11, 12.* for then sin appears sin, appears exceeding sinful, when we compare it with the law which is broken by it; nothing could be more express, *give not your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons*. The reason given is, because if they mingled with those nations, they would pollute themselves; it is an unclean land, and you are a holy people; but if they kept themselves distinct from them, it would be their honour and safety, and the perpetuating of their prosperity. Now to violate a command so express, backed with such reasons, and a fundamental law of their constitution, was very provoking to the God of heaven.

(6.) That in the judgments by which they had already smarted for their sins, God had *punished them less than their iniquities deserved*, so that he looked upon them to be still in debt upon the old account, what? and yet shall we run upon a new score? Has God dealt so gently with us in correcting us, and shall we thus abuse his favour, and turn his grace into wantonness? God in his grace and mercy had said concerning Sion's captivity, *she hath received of the Lords hand double for all her sins*, *Isa. xl. 2.* but Ezra, in a penitential sense of the great malignity that was in their sin, tho' the punishment was very great, owns it *less than they deserved*.

2. The devout affections that were working in him, in making this confession. Speaking of sin,

(1.) He speaks as one much ashamed. With this he begins, *ver. 6. O my God, I am ashamed, and blush, O my God* (so the words are placed) *to lift up my face unto thee*. Note, 1. Sin is a shameful thing; as soon as ever our first parents had eaten forbidden fruit, they were ashamed of themselves. 2. Holy shame is as necessary an ingredient in true and ingenuous repentance as holy sorrow. 3. Others sins should be our shame, and we should blush for those that do not blush for themselves; we may well be ashamed that we are any thing a-kin to those who are so ungrateful to God, and unwise for themselves. This is *clearing ourselves*, *2 Cor. vii. 11.* 4. Penitent sinners never see so much reason to blush and be ashamed, as when they come to *lift up their faces before God*. A natural sense of our own honour which we have injured, will make us ashamed when we have done an ill thing to look men in the face, but a gracious concern for God's honour will make



make us much more ashamed to look him in the face. The publican when he went to the temple to pray, hung down his head more than ever, as one ashamed, *Luke xviii. 13.* 5. An eye to God as our God, will be of great use to us in the exercise of repentance. Ezra begins, *O my God*, and again in the same breath, *my God*. The consideration of our covenant relation to God as ours, will help to humble us and break our hearts for sin, that we should violate both his precepts to us, and our promises to him: it will also encourage us to hope for pardon upon repentance. He is my God for all this, and every transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant.

(2.) He speaks as one much amazed, *ver. 10. What shall we say after this?* For my part I know not what to say: if God do not help us, we are undone. The discoveries of guilt are amazing, the more we think of sin, the worse it looks; the difficulty of the case is amazing, how shall we recover ourselves? which way shall we make our peace with God? (1.) The true penitents are at a loss what to say: shall we say we have *not sinned*, or that *God will not require it?* if we do, *we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. Shall we say, have patience with us, and we will pay thee all, with *thousands of rams, or our first-born, for our transgression?* God will not thus be mocked, he knows we are insolvent. Shall we say, *there is no hope*, and let come on us what will? That is but to make ill worse. (2.) True penitents will consider what to say, and should, as Ezra, beg of God to teach them; what shall we say? say I have sinned; I have done foolishly; God be merciful to me a sinner, and the like. See *Hof. xiv. 2.*

(3.) He speaks as one much afraid, *ver. 13, 14.* After all the judgments that are come upon us, to reclaim us from sin, and all the deliverances that have been wrought for us, to engage us to God and duty, if we should again break God's commandments, by joining in affinity with the children of disobedience, and learning their ways, what else could we expect, but that God should be *angry with us till he had consumed us*, and there should not be so much as a remnant left, nor any to escape the destruction. There is not a surer or sadder preface of ruin to any people, than revolting to sin, to the same sins again, after great judgments, and great deliverances. They that will be wrought upon neither by the one nor by the other, are fit to be rejected, as reprobate silver, for the *founder melteth in vain*.

(4.) He speaks as one much assured of the righteousness of God, and resolved to acquiesce in that, and to leave the matter with him, whose judgment is *according to truth*, *ver. 15. thou art righteous*, wise, and just, and good, that wilt neither do us wrong, nor be hard upon us, and therefore behold *we are before thee*, we lie at thy feet waiting our doom, *we cannot stand before thee*, insisting upon any righteousness of our own, having no plea to support us or bring us off, and therefore *we fall down before thee*, in our trespass, and cast ourselves on thy mercy, *do unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee*, *Judg. x. 15.* We have nothing to say, nothing to do, but to *make supplication to our Judge*, *Job ix. 15.* Thus doth this good man lay his grief before God, and then leave it with him.

## C H A P. X.

In this chapter we have that grievance redressed, which was complained of and lamented in the foregoing chapter. Observe, (1.) How the peoples hearts were prepared for the redress of it, by their deep humiliation for the sin, *ver. 1.* (2.) How it was proposed to Ezra by Shechaniah, *ver. 2—4.* (3.) How the proposal was put in execution. (1.) The great men were sworn to stand to it, *ver. 5.* (2.) Ezra appeared first in it, *ver. 6.* (3.) A general assembly was called, *ver. 7—9.* (4.) They all in compliance with Ezra's exhortation agreed to the reformation, *ver. 10—14.* (5.) Commissioners were appointed to sit, *de die in diem*, to enquire who had married strange wives, and to oblige them to put them away, which is done accordingly, *ver. 14—17.* and a list of the names of those that were found guilty given in, *ver. 18. 44.*

1. **N**OW when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel, a very great congregation of men, and women, and children: for the people wept very sore. 2. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives, of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. 3. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God, to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law. 4. Arise: for this matter belongeth unto thee; we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.

5. Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priest, the Levites, and all Israel to swear that they should do according to this word: and they swore.

We are here told,

1. What good impressions were made upon the people by Ezra's humiliation, and confession of sin. No sooner was it noised in the city, that their new governor whom they had joy in, was himself in grief, and to so great a degree for them and their sin, but presently there *assembled to him a very great congregation*, to see what the matter was, and to mingle their tears with his; *ver. 1.* Our weeping for other peoples sins may perhaps set them a weeping for them themselves, who otherwise would have continued senseless and remorseless. See what a happy influence the good examples of great ones may have upon their inferiors. When Ezra a scribe, a scholar, a man in authority under the king, so passionately lamented the publick corruptions, they concluded they were indeed very grievous, else he would not thus have grieved for them, and this drew tears from every eye, *men, women, and children wept very sore*, when he wept thus.

2. What a good motion Shechaniah made upon this occasion. The place was Bochim, a place of weepers; but, for ought appears, there was a profound silence among them, as among Job's friends, who *spoke not a word to him, because they saw that his grief was very great*, till Shechaniah (one of Ezra's companions from Babylon, *chap. viii. 3, 5.*) stood up and made a speech addressed to Ezra, in which,

1. He owns the national guilt, sums up all Ezra's confession in one word, and sets to his seal, that it was true, *we have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives*, *ver. 2.* The matter is too plain to be denied, and too bad to be excused. It doth not appear that Shechaniah was himself culpable in this matter, if he had had the beam in his own eye, he could not have seen so clearly to pluck it out of his brother's eye; but his father was guilty, and divers of his father's house, as appears, *ver. 26.* and therefore he reckons himself among the trespassers; nor doth he seek to excuse or palliate the sin, tho' some of his own relations were guilty of it, but, in the cause of God, *saith to his father, I have not known him*, as Levi, *Deut. xxxiii. 9.* Perhaps the strange wife that his father had married, had been an unjust unkind step-mother to him, and had made mischief in the family, and he supposed others had done the like, which made him the more forward to appear against this corruption, and if so, it was not the only time that private resentments have been over-ruled by the providence of God, to serve the publick good.

2. He encourageth himself and others to hope, that tho' the matter was bad, it might be amended, *yet now there is hope in Israel* (where else should be hope but in Israel! they that are strangers to that commonwealth, are said to have *no hope*, *Eph. ii. 12.*) even *concerning this thing*. The case is sad, but it is not desperate; the disease threatening, but not incurable. There is hope that the people may be reformed, the guilty reclaimed, a stop put to the spreading of the contagion, and so the judgments which the sin deserves may be prevented, and all will be well. *Now there is hope*; now the disease is discovered, it is half cured. Now the alarm is taken, the people begin to be sensible of the mischief, and to lament it, a spirit of repentance seems to be poured out upon them, and they are all thus humbling themselves before God for it, *now there is hope*, that God will forgive and have mercy. The valley of Achor, i. e. of trouble, is the *door of hope*, *Hof. ii. 15.* for the sin that truly troubles us shall not ruin us. There is hope now Israel has such a prudent pious zealous governor as Ezra to manage this affair. Note, 1. In melancholy times we must see and observe what makes for us, as well as what makes against us. 2. There may be good hopes through grace, even then when there is the sense of great guilt before God. 3. Where sin is seen and lamented, and good steps taken towards a reformation, even sinners ought to be encouraged. 4. Even great saints must thankfully receive seasonable counsel and comfort from those that are much their inferiors, as Ezra from Shechaniah.

3. He adviseth, that a speedy and effectual course should be taken, for the divorcing of the strange wives. The case is plain, what has been done amiss, must be undone again, as far as possible; nothing less than that is true repentance. Let us *put away all the wives, and such as are born of them*, *ver. 3.* Ezra, tho' he knew this was the only way of redressing the grievance, yet perhaps did not think it feasible, and despaired of ever bringing the people to it, which put him into that confusion that we left him in, in the foregoing chapter; but Shechaniah, who conversed more with the people than he did, assured him the thing was practicable, if they went wisely to work. As to us now; it is certain sin must be put away, a bill of divorce must be given it, with a resolution never to have any thing more to do with it, else no pardon, no peace; tho' it be dear as the wife of thy bosom, nay, as a right eye, or a right hand; what has been unjustly got, cannot be justly kept, but must be restored; but as to the case of being *unequally yoked with unbelievers*, Shechaniah's counsel, which he was then so clear in, will not hold now; such marriages it is certain are sinful, and ought not to be made, but they are not null, *quod fieri non debuit factum valet*, our rule under the gospel is, *1 Cor. vii.*



12, 13. *If a brother has a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.*

4. He puts them into a good method for the effecting of this reformation, and shews them not only that it must be done, but how. (1.) Let Ezra, and all those that were present in this assembly agree in a resolution that this must be done; pass a vote immediately to this purpose, it will now pass *nemine contradicente*, that it may be said to be done *according to the counsel of my lord*, the president of the assembly, with the unanimous concurrence of those that *tremble at the commandment of our God*, which is the description of those that were gathered to him, *chap. ix. 4.* Declare it to be the sense of all the sober serious people among us, which cannot but have a great sway among Israelites. (2.) Let the command of God in this matter, which Ezra had recited in his prayer, be laid before the people, and let them see that it is *done according to the law*; we have that to warrant us, nay, that binds us to what we do; it is not an addition of our own to the divine law, but the necessary execution of it. (3.) While we are in a good mind, let us bind our selves by a solemn vow and covenant, that we will do it, lest, when the present impressions are worn off, the thing be left undone. Let us covenant not only that, if we have strange wives our selves, we will put them away, but that if we have not, we will do what we can in our places to oblige others to put away theirs. (4.) Let Ezra himself preside in this matter, who is authorized by the king's commission, to inquire whether the law of God was duly observed in Judah and Jerusalem, *chap. vii. 14.* and let us all resolve to stand by him in it, *ver. 4.* *Arise, be of good courage.* Weeping in this case is good, but reforming is better. See what God said to Joshua in a like case, *Josh. vii. 10, 11.*

3. What a good resolution they came to upon this good motion, *ver. 5.* They not only agreed that it should be done, but bound themselves with an oath that they would do according to this word. Fast bind, fast find.

6. ¶ Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and *when* he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. 7. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem, unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; 8. And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away. 9. ¶ Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin, gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days: it *was* the ninth month, on the twentieth *day* of the month, and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of *this* matter, and for the great rain. 10. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives to increase the trespasses of Israel. 11. Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate your selves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. 12. Then all the congregation answered, and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do. 13. But the people are many, and *it is* a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither *is this* a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing. 14. Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities, come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.

We have here an account of the proceedings upon the resolutions lately taken up concerning the strange wives; no time was lost; they struck when the iron was hot, and soon set the wheels of reformation a-going.

1. Ezra went to the council-chamber, where, it is probable, the priests used to meet upon publick business. And *till he came thither*, (so bishop Patrick thinks it should be read) till he saw something done, and more likely to be done for the redress of this grievance, he did *neither eat nor drink*, but continued mourning. Sorrow for sin should be abiding sorrow; be sure let it continue till the sin be put away.

2. He sent orders to all the children of the captivity to attend him at Jerusalem within *three days*, *ver. 7, 8.* and being authorized by the king to enforce his orders, with penalties annexed, *chap. vii. 26.* he threatened, that whosoever refused to obey these

summons, should forfeit his estate, and be out-lawed. He that would not attend on this religious account, his doom should be, that his substance should, in his stead, be ever after appropriated to the service of their religion, and he himself, for his contempt, should for ever after be excluded from the honours and privileges of their religion; that he should be excommunicated.

3. Within the time limited, the generality of the people met at Jerusalem, and made their appearance *in the street of the house of God*, *ver. 9.* They that had no zeal for the work they were called to, nay, perhaps had a dislike to it, being themselves delinquents, yet paid such a deference to Ezra's authority, and were so awed by the penalty, that they durst not stay away.

4. God gave them a token of his displeasure, in the great rain that happened at that time, *ver. 9.* and again, *ver. 13.* which perhaps kept some away, however it was grievous to them that met in the open street, when they wept, the heavens wept too, signifying that tho' God was angry with them for their sin, yet he was well pleased with their repentance, and (as it is said, *Judg. x. 16.*) *his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*; and it was also an indication of the good fruits of their repentance, for the rain makes the earth fruitful.

5. Ezra gave the charge at this great assize, told them upon what account he called them together now, because he found, that since their return out of captivity, they had *increased the trespasses of Israel by marrying strange wives*, added to their former sins this new transgression, which would certainly be a means of introducing idolatry again, the very sin they had smarted for, and which he hoped they had been cured of in their captivity. And he called them together, that they might *confess their sin to God*, and having done that, might declare themselves ready and willing to do his pleasure, as it should be made known to them, which all those will do that truly repent of what they have done to incur his displeasure, and particularly that they might separate themselves from all idolaters, especially idolatrous wives, *ver. 10, 11.* On these heads, we may suppose, he enlarged, and probably made such another confession of the sin now, as he had made, *chap. ix.* which he required them to say Amen to.

6. The people submitted themselves not only to Ezra's jurisdiction in general, but to his inquisition and determination in this matter. *As thou hast said so must we do*, *ver. 12.* We have sinned in mingling our selves with the heathen, and have thereby endangered not only our being corrupted by them, for we are frail, but our being lost among them, for we are few, and therefore we are convinced there is an absolute necessity of our separating from them again; then there is hopes of people, when they are convinced not only that it is good to part with their sins, but that it is indispensably necessary, we must do it, or we are undone.

7. It was agreed, that this affair should be carried on not in a popular assembly, nor that they should think to go through with it all on a sudden, but that a court of delegates should be appointed to receive complaints, and to hear and determine upon them. It could not be done at this time, for it was not put into a method, nor could the people stand out because of the rain; the delinquents were many, and it would require time to discover and examine them. Nice cases would arise, which could not be adjudged without debate and deliberation, *ver. 13.* And therefore let the croud be dismissed, and the rulers stand to receive informations; let them proceed city by city, and let the offenders be convicted before them, in the presence of the judges and elders of their own city, and let them be intrusted to see the orders executed; thus *take time, and we shall have done the sooner*; whereas, if we do it in a hurry we shall do it by the halves, *ver. 14.* And if in this method, a thorough reformation be made, the *fierce wrath of God*, will be *turned from us*, which we are sensible is ready to break forth against us for this transgression.

Ezra was willing that his zeal should be guided by the peoples prudence, and put the matter into this method: and is not ashamed to own, that the advice came from them, no more than he was to comply with it.

15. ¶ Only Jonathan the son of Asahel, and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah, were employed about this matter: and Meshullam, and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.

16. And the children of the captivity did so: and Ezra the priest, *with* certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by *their* names were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. 17. And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives, by the first day of the first month. 18. ¶ And among the sons of the priests, there were found that had taken strange wives: *namely*, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren: Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. 19. And they gave their hands, that they would put away their wives; and *being* guilty, *they offered* a ram of the flock for their trespasses. 20. And of the sons of Immer; Hanani and Zebadiah.



Zebadiah. 21. And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uziah. 22. And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elafah. 23. Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same is Kelita) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. 24. Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters Shallum, and Temen, and Uri. 25. Moreover, of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziel, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah. 26. And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah. 27. And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. 28. Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. 29. And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth. 30. And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. 31. And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon. 32. Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. 33. Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. 34. Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel. 35. Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh. 36. Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib. 37. Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau. 38. And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei. 39. And Shelamiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah. 40. Machnadebai, Shafai, Sharai. 41. Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah. 42. Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. 43. Of the sons of Nebo, Jeiel, Mattathiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah. 44. All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

The method of proceeding in this matter being concluded on, and the congregation dismissed, that each in their respective places might gain and give intelligence, to facilitate the matter; we are here told,

1. Who were the persons that undertook to manage the matter, and bring the causes regularly before the commissioners, Jonathan and Jahaziah, two active men, whether of the priests or of the people doth not appear, probably they were the men that made that proposal, ver. 13, 14. being the fittest to see it pursued; and two honest Levites joined with them, and helped them, ver. 15. Dr Lightfoot gives a contrary sense of this; *Only*, (or *nevertheless*) *Jonathan and Jahaziah stood against this matter*, (which

reading the original will very well bear) and these two Levites helped them, in opposing it, either the thing it self or this method of proceeding. It was strange, if a work of this kind was carried on, and met with no opposition.

2. Who were the commissioners that sat upon this matter; Ezra was president, and with him *certain chief of the fathers* who were qualified with wisdom and zeal above others for this service, ver. 16. It was happy for them they had such a man as Ezra to head them, they could not have done it well without his conduct, yet he would not do it without their concurrence.

3. How long they were about it. They began *the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter*, ver. 16. which was but ten days after this method was proposed, ver. 9. and they finished in three months, ver. 17. They sat close and minded their business, else they could not have dispatched so many causes as they had before them in so little time; for we may suppose, all that were impeached were fairly asked what cause they could shew why they should not be parted? and (if we may judge by other cases) provided the wife were proselyted to the Jewish religion, she was not to be put away; the trial of which would require great care.

4. Who the persons were that were found guilty of this crime; their names here are recorded to their perpetual reproach; many of the priests, nay, of the family of Joshua, the high-priest were found guilty, ver. 18. tho' the law had particularly provided for the preserving of their honour in their marriages, that being holy themselves, they should not marry such as were profane, Lev. xxi. 7. They that should have taught others the law, broke it themselves, and by their example emboldened others to do likewise. But having lost their innocency in this matter, they did well to play an after-game, and lead in repentance, and give an example of that too; for (1.) They promised *under their hand* to put away their strange wives, and some think sware it with their *hands lifted up*. (2.) They took the appointed way of obtaining pardon, bringing the ram which was appointed by the law for a trespass-offering, Lev. vi. 6. so owning their guilt, and the desert of it, and humbly suing for forgiveness.

About one hundred and thirteen in all are here named who had married strange wives, and some of them, it is said, ver. 44. had children by them, which implies that not many of them had; God not crowning those marriages with the blessing of increase, whether the children were turned off with the mothers, as Shechaniah proposed, doth not appear, it should seem not; but however, it is likely, that the wives that were put away, were well provided for, according to their rank. One would think this grievance was now thoroughly redressed, yet we meet with it again, Neh. xiii. 22. and Mal. ii. 11. for such corruptions are easily and insensibly brought in, but not without great difficulty purged out again. The best reformers can but do their endeavour, but when the Redeemer himself shall come to Sion, he shall effectually turn away ungodliness from Jacob.





A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

Of the BOOK of

N E H E M I A H.

*This book continues the history of the children of the captivity; the poor Jews that were lately returned out of Babylon to their own land. At this time not only the Persian monarchy flourished in great pomp and power, but Greece and Rome began to be very great, and make a figure; of the affairs of those high and mighty states, we have authentick accounts extant; but the sacred and inspired history takes cognizance only of the state of the Jews, and makes no mention of other nations, but as the Israel of God had dealings with them, for the Lord's portion is his people, they are his peculiar treasure, and in comparison with them, the rest of the world is but as lumber; and in my eye, Ezra the scribe, and Nehemiah the Tirshatha, tho' neither of them ever wore a crown, commanded an army, or conquered any country, or were famed for philosophy or oratory, yet both of them being pious praying men, and very serviceable in their day to the church of God, and the interests of religion, were really greater men, and more honourable not only than any of the Roman consuls or dictators, but than Xenophon, or Demosthenes, or Plato himself, who lived at the same time, the bright ornaments of Greece. Nehemiah's agency for the advancing of the settlement of Israel, we have a full account of, in this book of his own commentaries or memoirs, wherein he records not only the works of his hands, but the workings of his heart in the management of publick affairs; inserting in the story many devout reflections and ejaculations, which discover in his mind a very deep tincture of serious piety, and are peculiar to his writing. Twelve years he was governor of Judea, under Artaxerxes king of Persia, from his twentieth year, chap. i. 1. to his thirty second year, chap. xiii. 6. whom Dr Lightfoot supposeth to be the same Artaxerxes from whom Ezra had his commission. This book relates, (1.) Nehemiah's concern for Jerusalem, and the commission he had obtained from the king to go thither, chap. i. 2. (2.) His building of the wall of Jerusalem, notwithstanding the opposition he met with, chap. iii. 4. (3.) His redressing the grievances of the people, chap. v. (4.) His finishing the wall, chap. vi. (5.) The account he took of the people, chap. vii. (6.) The religious solemnities of reading the law, fasting and praying, and renewing their covenants, which he called the people to, chap. viii. 9, 10. (7.) The care he took for the replenishing of the holy city, and the settling of the holy tribe, chap. xi. 12. (8.) His zeal in reforming divers abuses, chap. xiii. Some call this the second book of Ezra, not because he was the penman of it, but because it is a continuation of the history of the foregoing book, to which it is connected, ver. 1. This was the last historical book that was written, as Malachi the last prophetic book of the Old Testament.*

C H A P. I.

*Here we first meet with Nehemiah at the Persian court, where we find him, (1.) Inquisitive concerning the state of the Jews and Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Informed of their deplorable state, ver. 3. (3.) Fasting and praying thereupon, ver. 4. with a particular account of his prayer, ver. 5—11. Such is the rise of this great man, by piety, not by policy.*

No. XXXIII.

1. **T**HE words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, 2. That Hanani one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah: and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the



province, *are* in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also *is* broken down, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire. 4. ¶ And it came to pass when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

What tribe Nehemiah was of, doth no where appear, but if it be true which we are told by the author of the Maccabees, *lib. ii. cap. i. 18.* that he offered sacrifice, we must conclude him to be a priest. We are here told, that he was in Shushan, the palace, or royal city, of the king of Persia, where the court was ordinarily kept, *ver. 1.* and *ver. 11.* that he was the king's cup-bearer. Kings and great men probably looked upon it as a piece of state to be attended by those of other nations. By this place at court, (1.) He would be the better qualified for the service of his country, in that post for which God had designed him; as Moses was the fitter to govern, for being bred up in Pharaoh's court, and David in Saul's. (2.) He would have the fairer opportunity of serving his country by his interest in the king, and those about him. Observe, He is not forward to tell us what great preferment he had at court; it is not till the end of the chapter, that he tells us he was the king's cup-bearer, (a place of great trust, as well as of honour and profit) when he could not avoid the mentioning of it because of the following story; but at first, he only saith, *I was in Shushan the palace*; whence we may learn to be humble and modest, and sparing to speak of our own advancements. But in the providences of God concerning him, we may observe to our comfort, (1.) That when God has work to do, he will never want instruments to do it with. (2.) That those whom God designs to employ in his service, he will find out proper ways both to fit them for it, and to call them to it. (3.) That God has his remnant in all places; there was Obadiah in the house of Ahab, saints in Cæsar's household, and a devout Nehemiah in Shushan the palace. (4.) That God can make the courts of princes sometimes nurseries, and sometimes sanctuaries, to the friends and patrons of the church's cause.

Now here we have,

1. Nehemiah's tender and compassionate enquiry concerning the state of the Jews in their own land, *ver. 2.* It happened that a friend and relation of his came to the court with some other company, by whom he had an opportunity of informing himself fully, how it went with the children of the captivity, and what posture Jerusalem, the beloved, city was in. Nehemiah lived at ease, in honour, and fulness himself, but cannot forget that he is an Israelite, nor shake off the thoughts of his brethren in distress, but he doth in spirit (like Moses, *Acts vii. 23.*) *visit them, and look upon their burthens.* As distance of place did not alienate his affections from them, tho' they were out of sight, yet not out of mind, so neither did, (1.) The dignity to which he was advanced. Tho' he was a great man, and robably rising higher, yet he did not think it below him to take cognizance of his brethren that were low and despised, nor was he ashamed to own his relation to them, and concern for them. (2.) The diversity of their sentiments from his, and the difference of their practice accordingly. Tho' he did not go to settle at Jerusalem himself, (as we think he ought to have done, now liberty was proclaimed) but conformed to the court and staid there, yet he did not therefore judge or despise them that were returned, or upbraid them as impolitick, but kindly concerned himself for them, and was ready to do them all the good offices he could: and that he might know which way to do them a kindness, *he asked concerning them.* Note, It is lawful and good to enquire, what news? We should enquire especially concerning the state of the church and religion, and how it fares with the people of God; and the design of our enquiry must be, not that, like the Athenians, we may have something to talk of, but that we may know how to direct our prayers and praises.

2. The melancholy account which is here given him of the present state of the Jews and Jerusalem, *ver. 3.* Hanani, the person he enquired of, has this character given of him, *chap. ii. 2.* that he *feared God above many*, and therefore would not only speak truly, but when he spake of the desolations of Jerusalem speak tenderly: and, it is probable, his errand to court at this time was to solicit for some favour, some relief or other that they stood in need of. Now the account he gives is, (1.) That the holy feed was miserably trampled on, and abused; in great affliction and reproach; insulted upon all occasions by their neighbours, and *filled with the scorning of them that were at ease.* (2.) That the holy city was exposed, and in ruins. The wall of Jerusalem was still broken down, and the gates, as the Chaldeans left them, in ruins. This made the condition of the inhabitants both very despicable under the abiding marks of poverty and slavery, and very dangerous, for their enemies might when they pleased make an easy prey of them. The temple was built, the government settled, and a work of reformation brought to some head, but here was one good work yet undone; this was still wanting: Every Jerusalem on this side the heavenly one will have some defect or other in it, for the making up of which it will require the help and service of its friends.

3. The great affliction this gave to Nehemiah, and the deep concern it put him into, *ver. 4.* (1.) He *wept and mourned.* It was not only just when he heard the news, that he fell into a passion of weeping, but his sorrow continued certain days. Note, The desolations and distresses of the church, ought to be the matter of our grief, how much soever we live at ease. (2.) He *fasted and prayed*, not in publick, he had no opportunity of doing that, but *before the God of heaven, who sees in secret, and will reward openly.* By his fasting and praying, (1.) He consecrated his sorrows, and directed his tears aright; sorrowed *after a godly sort*, with an eye to God, because his name was reproached in the contempt cast on his people, whose cause therefore he thus commits to him. (2.) He eased his sorrows, and unburthened his spirit, by pouring out his complaint before God, and leaving it with him. (3.) He took the right method of fetching in relief for his people, and direction for himself in what way to serve them. Let them who are forming any good designs for the service of the publick, take God along with them from the first conception of them, and utter all their projects before him; that is the way to prosper in them.

5. And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: 6. Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I, and my fathers house have sinned. 7. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes nor the judgments which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. 8. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, *If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:* 9. But *if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.* 10. Now these *are* thy servants, and thy people whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. 11. O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cup-bearer.

We have here Nehemiah's prayer; a prayer that has reference to all the prayers, which he had for some time before been putting up to God day and night, while he continued his sorrows for the desolations of Jerusalem: and withal to the petition he was now intending to present to the king his master for his favour to Jerusalem.

We may observe in this prayer,

1. His humble and reverent address to God, in which he prostrates himself before him, and gives unto him the glory due unto his name, *ver. 5.* it is much the same with that of Daniel, *chap. ix. 4.* It teacheth us to draw near to God, (1.) With a holy awe to his majesty and glory; remembering that he is the God of heaven, infinitely above us, and sovereign Lord over us, and that he is *the great and terrible God*, infinitely excelling all the principalities and powers, both of the upper and of the lower world, angels and kings: and he is a God to be worshipped with fear by all his people, and whose powerful wrath all his enemies have reason to be afraid of. Even the terrors of the Lord are improvable, for the comfort and encouragement of those that trust in him. (2.) With a holy confidence in his grace and truth, for he *keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him*; not only for the mercy that is promised, but even more than he promised; nothing shall be thought too much to be done for them that *love him, and keep his commandments.*

2. His general request for the audience and acceptance of all the prayers and confessions he now made to God, *ver. 6.* *Let thine ear be attentive to the prayer*, not which I say, (bare saying prayer will not serve) but *which I pray before thee*, then we are like to speed in praying, when we pray in praying; and let *thine eyes be open upon the heart*, from which the prayer comes, and the case which is in prayer laid before thee. God *formed the eye*, and *planted the ear*, and therefore shall he not see clearly? shall not he hear attentively?

3. His penitent confession of sin; not only Israel has sinned, it was no great mortification to him to own that, but *I and my fathers house have sinned*, *ver. 6.* Thus doth he humble himself, and take shame to himself in this confession; *we have* (I and my family



family among the rest have) *dealt very corruptly against thee*, ver. 7. in the confession of sin, let these two things be owned as the malignity of it, that it is a corruption of our selves, and an affront to God; it is *dealing corruptly against God*, setting up the corruptions of our own hearts in opposition to the commands of God.

4. The pleas he urges for mercy for his people Israel. 1. He pleads what God had of old said to them, the rule he had settled of his proceedings towards them, which might be the rule of their expectations from him, ver. 8, 9. He had said indeed, that if they broke covenant with him, he would *scatter them among the nations*, and that threatening was fulfilled; in their captivity; never was people so widely dispersed as Israel was at this time, tho' at first so closely incorporated; but he had said withal, that if they *turned to him* (as now they began to do, having renounced idolatry and kept to the temple-service,) he would *gather them again*. This he quotes from *Deut. xxx. 1—5*. and begs leave to put God in mind of it, (tho' the eternal mind needs no remembrance) as that which he guided his desires by, and grounded his faith and hope upon in praying this prayer, *remember I beseech thee that word*; for thou hast said, *put me in remembrance*. He had owned, ver. 7. *We have not kept the judgments which thou commandest thy servant Moses*, yet begs, ver. 8. Lord, *remember the word which thou commandest thy servant Moses*; for the covenant is often said to be commanded: if God were not more mindful of his promises, than we are of his precepts, we were undone. Our best pleas therefore in prayer, are those that are taken from the promise of God, the word on which he has caused us to hope, *Psal. cxix. 49*.

2. He pleads the relation wherein of old they stood to God, these are *thy servants and thy people*, ver. 10. whom thou hast set apart for thy self, and taken into covenant with thee: wilt thou suffer thy sworn enemies to trample upon and oppress thy sworn servants? if thou wilt not appear for thy people, whom wilt thou appear for? see *Isa. lxiii. 19*. As an evidence of their being God's servants, he gives them this character, ver. 11. *they desire to fear thy name*: they are not only called by thy name, but really have a reverence for thy name; they now worship thee, and thee only, according to thy will, and have an awe of all the discoveries thou art pleased to make of thy self; this they have a desire to do, which notes, (1.) Their good will to it; it is their constant care and endeavour to be found in the way of their duty, and they aim at it, tho' in many instances they come short. (2.) Their complacency in it, they take pleasure to fear thy name, so it may be read; not only do their duty, but do it with delight. Those shall graciously be accepted of God, that truly desire to fear his name; for those desires are his own work.

3. He pleads the great things God had formerly done for them, ver. 10. *whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power*, in the days of old, and thy power is still the same; wilt thou not therefore still redeem them, and perfect their redemption? Let not them be overpowered by the enemy, that have a God of infinite power on their side.

Lastly, He concludes with a particular petition, that God would prosper him in his undertaking, and give him favour with the king: *This man* he calls him, for the greatest of men are but men before God; they must know themselves to be so, *Psal. ix. 20*. and others must know them to be so, *who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man?* mercy in the sight of this man, is what he prays for, meaning not the king's mercy, but mercy from God in his address to the king. Favour with men is then comfortable, when we can see it springing from the mercy of God.

## C H A P. II.

How Nehemiah wrestled with God and prevailed, we read in the foregoing chapter; now here we are told how like Jacob he prevailed with men also, and so found that his prayers were heard and answered. (1.) He prevailed with the king to send him to Jerusalem with a commission to build a wall about it, and grant him what was necessary for it, ver. 1—8. (2.) He prevailed against the enemies that would have obstructed him in his journey, ver. 9—11. and laughed him out of his undertaking, ver. 19, 20. (3.) He prevailed upon his own people to join with him in this good work; viewing the desolations of the wall, ver. 12—16. and then gaining them to lend every one a hand towards the rebuilding of them, ver. 17, 18. Thus did God own him in the work to which he called him.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. 2. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, 3. And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers se-

pulchres, lieth waste; and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? 4. Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers sepulchres, that I may build it. 6. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. 7. Moreover, I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over, till I come into Judah; 8. And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

When Nehemiah had prayed for the relief of his countrymen; and perhaps in David's words, *Psal. li. 18. Build thou the walls of Jerusalem*, he did not sit still and say, let God now do his own work, for I have no more to do: but set himself to forecast what he could do towards it. For our prayers must be seconded with our serious endeavours, else we mock God. Near four months passed from Chisleu to Nisan, from November to March; before Nehemiah made his application to the king for leave to go to Jerusalem; either because the winter was not a proper time for such a journey, and he would not make the motion till he could pursue it, or because it was so long before his month of waiting came, and there was no coming into the king's presence uncalled, *Esth. iv. 11*. Now he attended the king's table he hoped to have his ear; we are not thus limited to certain moments in our addresses to the King of kings; but have liberty of access to him at all times: to the throne of grace we never come unseasonably. Now here is,

1. The occasion which he gave the king to enquire into his cares and griefs, by appearing sad in his presence. Those that speak to such great men, must not fall abruptly upon their business, but fetch a compass. Nehemiah would try whether he were in a good humour, before he ventured to tell him his errand; and this method he took to try him. He took up the wine and gave it to the king when he called for it, expecting that then he would look him in the face. He had not used to be sad in the king's presence, but conformed to the rules of the court (as courtiers must do) which would admit no sorrows, *Esth. iv. 2*. Tho' he was a stranger, a captive, he was easy and pleasant. Good men should do what they can by their cheerfulness, to convince the world of the pleasantness of religious ways; and to roll away the reproach cast upon them as melancholy; but there is a time for all things, *Ecccl. iii. 4*. Nehemiah now saw cause both to be sad, and to appear so. The miseries of Jerusalem gave him cause to be sad, and his shewing it will give occasion to the king to enquire into the cause; he did not dissemble sadness, for he was really in grief for the afflictions of Joseph, and was not like the hypocrites who *disfigure their faces*; yet he could have concealed his grief; if it had been necessary, the heart knows its own bitterness, and in the midst of laughter is often sad, but it would now serve his purpose to discover his sadness. Tho' he had wine before him, and probably according to the office of the cup-bearer, did himself drink of it before he gave it the king; yet it would not make his heart glad, while God's Israel was in distress.

2. The kind notice which the king took of his sadness, and the enquiry he made into the cause of it, ver. 2. *Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick?* Note, (1.) We ought from a principle of christian sympathy to concern our selves in the sorrows and sadnesses of others, even of our inferiors, and not say, what is it to us! Let not masters despise their servants' griefs; but desire to make them easy. The great God is not pleased with the dejections and disquietments of his people, but would have them both *serve him with gladness*, and *eat their bread with joy*. (2.) It is not strange if those that are sick have sad countenances, because of what is felt, and what is feared; sickness will make those grave, that were most airy and gay: yet a good man even in sickness may be of good cheer, if he know that his sins are forgiven. (3.) Freedom from sickness is so great a mercy; that while we have that, we ought not to be inordinately dejected under any outward burthen; yet sorrow for our own sins, and the sins of others, and the calamities of God's church, may well sadden the countenance without sickness.

3. The account which Nehemiah gave the king of the cause of his sadness, which he gives with meekness and fear. (1.) With fear, he owns that now (tho' it appears by the following story he was a man of courage,) *he was sore afraid*, perhaps of the king's wrath, for those eastern monarchs assumed an absolute power of life and death, *Dan. ii. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19*. or misplacing a word, and



and losing his request by the mismanagement of it; tho' he was a wise man, he was jealous of himself; lest he should say any thing imprudently; it becomes us to be so. A good assurance is indeed a good accomplishment, yet a humble self-diffidence is no man's dispraise. (2.) With meekness, without reflection upon any man, and with all the respect, deference, and good will imaginable to the king his master, in these words, *let the king live for ever*; he is wise and good, and the fittest man in the world to rule; he modestly asked, *why should not my countenance be sad as it is, when (tho' I my self am well, and at ease) the city, (the king knew what city he meant) the place of my fathers sepulchres lieth waste?* Many are melancholy and sad, but can give no good reason for it, cannot tell why or wherefore; such should chide themselves for, and chide themselves out of their unjust and unreasonable griefs and fears: but Nehemiah could give so good a reason for his sadness, as to appeal to the king himself concerning it. Observe, (1.) He calls Jerusalem the *place of his fathers sepulchres*, the place where his ancestors were buried; it is good for us to think often of our fathers sepulchres; we are apt to dwell in our thoughts upon their honours and titles, their houses and estates, but let us think also of their sepulchres, and consider that they who have gone before us in the world, have also gone before us out of the world, and their monuments are memento's to us; and there is a great respect owing to the memory of our fathers that that be not injured. All nations, even those that have had no expectation of the resurrection of the dead, have looked upon the sepulchres of their ancestors as in some degree sacred, and not to be violated. (2.) He justifies himself in his grief: I do well to be sad; why should I not be so? There is a time even for pious and prosperous men to be sad, and to shew it. The best men must not think to antedate heaven by banishing all sorrowful thoughts; it is a vale of tears we pass through, and we must submit to the temper of the climate. (3.) He assigns the ruins of Jerusalem as the true cause of his grief. Note, All the grievances of the church, but especially its desolations, are and ought to be matter of grief and sadness to all good people, to all that have a concern for God's honour, and that are living members of Christ's mystical body, and are of a publick spirit; they favour even Zion's dust, *Psal. cii. 14.*

4. The encouragement which the king gave him to tell his mind, and the application he thereupon made in his heart to God, ver. 4. The king had an affection for him, and was not pleased to see him melancholy, and, it is likely had a kindness for the Jews religion, he had discovered it before in the commission he gave to Ezra, who was a church-man, and now again in the power he put Nehemiah into, who was a statesman; wanting therefore only to know how he might be serviceable to Jerusalem, he asks this its careful friend, *for what dost thou make request*: something thou wouldst have, what is it? He was afraid to speak, ver. 2. but this gave him boldness: much more may the invitation Christ has given us to pray, and the promise that we shall speed, enable us to come boldly to the throne of grace. Nehemiah immediately *prayed to the God of heaven*, that he would give him wisdom to ask decently, and incline the king's heart to grant him his request. They that would find favour with kings, must secure the favour of the King of king's. He prayed to the God of heaven, as infinitely above, even this mighty monarch. It was not a solemn prayer, he had not opportunity for that, but a secret sudden ejaculation, he lift up his heart to that God who understands the language of the heart, *Lord, give me a mouth and wisdom; Lord, give me favour in the sight of this man.* Note, It is good to be much in pious ejaculations, especially upon particular occasions, wherever we are, we have a way open heaven-ward; this will hinder no business but further it rather, therefore let no business hinder this but give rise to it rather. Nehemiah had prayed very solemnly with reference to this very occasion, chap. i. 12. yet when it comes to the push he prays again. Ejaculations and solemn prayers must not jumble out one another, but each have its place.

5. His humble petition to the king, when he had this encouragement, he presents it very modestly, and with submission to the king's wisdom, ver. 5. But very particularly, he asks for a commission to go governor to Judah, to build the wall of Jerusalem, and to stay there for a certain time, so many months we may suppose, and then either he had his commission renewed, or went back and was sent again, so that he presided there twelve years at least, chap. v. 14. He also asked for a convoy, ver. 7. and an order upon the governors, not only to permit and suffer him to pass through their respective provinces, but to supply him with what he had occasion for: with another order upon the keeper of the forest of Lebanon to give him timber for his work that he designed.

6. The king's great favour to him. In asking him *when he would return*, ver. 6. he intimated that he would not lose him, nor could be long without him; yet to gratify him, and do a real office of kindness to his people, he would spare him a while, and let him have what clauses he pleased inserted in his commission, ver. 8. Here was an immediate answer to his prayer, for the seed of Jacob never sought the God of Jacob in vain. In the account he gives of the success of his petition, he takes notice (1.) Of the presence of the queen, the sat by, ver. 6. which (they say) was not usual

in the Persian court, (*Ezth. i. 11.*) Whether the queen was his back-friend, that would have hindered him, and he observes it to the praise of God's powerful providence, that tho' she was by, yet he sped, or whether she was his true friend, and it is observed to the praise of God's kind providence, that she was present to help forward his request, is not certain. (2.) Of the power and grace of God. He gained his point, not according to his merit, his interest in the king, or his good management, but *according to the good hand of his God upon him.* Gracious souls take notice of God's hand, his good hand, in all events which turn in favour of them, *This is the Lord's doing*, and therefore doubly acceptable.

9. ¶ Then I came to the governors beyond the river: and gave them the king's letters. (Now the king had sent captains of the army, and horse-men with me) 10. When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. 11. So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. 12. ¶ And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me, neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. 13. And I went out by night, by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon-well, and to the dung-port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. 14. Then I went on the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. 15. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. 16. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did, neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. 17. ¶ Then said I unto them, ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire: come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. 18. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. 19. But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? 20. Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.

We are here told,

1. How Nehemiah was dismissed by the court he was sent from; the king appointed *captains of the army* and *horsemen* to go with him, ver. 9. both for his guard, and to shew that he was a man whom the king did delight to honour, that all the king's servants might respect him accordingly. Whom the King of kings sends, he thus protects, he thus dignifies with an host of angels to attend them.

2. How he was received by the country he was sent to.

1. By the Jews and their friends at Jerusalem; we are told,

(1.) That while he concealed his errand they took little notice of him; he was at *Jerusalem three days*, ver. 11. and it doth not appear that any of the great men of the city waited on him to congratulate his arrival, but he lay *incognito*; the king sent horsemen to attend him, but the Jews sent none to meet him, he had no beast with him, but that which he himself rode on, ver. 12. Wise men, and those who are worthy of double honour, yet covet not to come with observation, to make a shew, or make a noise, no not when they come with the greatest blessings. They that shortly are to have *the dominion in the morning*, the world now knows not, but they lie hid, 1 John iii. 1.

(2.) That tho' they took little notice of him, he took great notice of them and their state. He rose in the night and viewed the ruins of the walls, probably by moon-light, ver. 13. that he might see what was to be done, and in what method they must go about it, whether the old foundation would serve, and what there was of the old materials that would be of use. Note, 1. Good work is then like to be well done, when it is first well considered. 2. It is the wisdom of those who are engaged in publick business, as much as may be to *see with their own eyes*, and not to proceed



proceed altogether upon the reports and representations of others, and yet to do this without noise, and, if possible, unobserved. 3. They that would build the church's walls, must first take notice of the ruins of those walls. They that would know how to amend, must enquire what is amiss; what needs reformation, and what may serve as it is.

(3.) That when he discovered his design to the rulers and people they cheerfully concurred with him in it. He did not tell them at first what he came about, *ver. 16.* because he would not seem to do it for ostentation, and that if he found it impracticable, he might retreat the more honourably; upright humble men will not sound a trumpet before their alms, or any other their good offices. But when he had viewed and considered the thing, and probably felt the pulse of the rulers and people, he told them *what God had put into his heart, ver. 12.* even to build up the wall of Jerusalem, *ver. 17.* Observe, (1.) How fairly he proposed it to them, *ye see the distress we are in,* how we lie exposed to the enemies that are round about us, how justly they reproach us, as foolish and despicable, how easily they may make a prey of us whenever they have a mind. *Come therefore and let us build up the wall.* He doth not undertake to do it without them. It could not be the work of one man; nor doth he charge and command imperiously, tho' he had the king's commission, but in a friendly brotherly way, exhorts and excites them to join with him in this work. To encourage them hereto, he speaks of the design; (1.) As that which *owed its original to the special grace of God.* He takes not the praise of it to himself, as a good thought of his own, but acknowledgeth that God *put it into his heart,* and therefore they all ought to countenance it, whatever is of God must be promoted; and might hope to prosper in it, for what God puts men upon he will own them in. (2.) As that which owed its progress hitherto to the special providence of God. He produced the king's commission, told them how readily it was granted, and how forward the king was to favour his design, in which he saw the hand of his God *good upon him.* It would encourage both him and them to proceed in an undertaking which God had so remarkably smiled upon. Thus he proposed it to them; and, (2.) They presently came to a resolution, one and all, to concur with him, *let us rise up and build.* They are ashamed that they have sat still so long without so much as attempting this needful work, and now resolve to rise up out of their slothfulness, to bestir themselves, and to stir up one another. *Let us rise up, i. e. let us do it with vigour, and diligence, and resolution, as those that are determined to go through with it. So they strengthened their hands, their own and one another's, for this good work.* Note, 1. Many a good work would find hands enough to be laid to it, if there were but *one good head to lead in it.* They all saw the desolations of Jerusalem, yet none proposed the repair of them. But when Nehemiah proposed it, they all consented to it. It is pity a good motion should be lost purely for want of one to move it and to break the ice in it. 2. By *stirring up our selves and one another to that which is good, we strengthen our selves and one another for it;* for the great reason why we are weak in our duty, is because we are cold to it, indifferent and unresolved.

2. Let us now see how Nehemiah was received by those that wished ill to the Jews, whom God and his Israel blessed they cursed.

1. When he did but shew his face, it vexed them, *ver. 10.* Sanballat and Tobiah two of the Samaritans, but by birth the former a Moabite, the latter an Ammonite, when they saw one come armed with a commission from the king to do service to Israel, it *grieved them exceedingly,* that all their little sneaking paltry arts to weaken Israel were thus baffled and frustrated, by a fair and noble and generous project to strengthen them. Nothing is a greater vexation to the enemies of good people who have misrepresented them to princes as turbulent and factious and not fit to live, than to see them stand right in the opinion of their rulers, their innocency cleared, and their reproach rolled away, and that they are thought not only fit to live, but fit to be trusted. When they saw a man come in that port, who professedly *sought the welfare of the children of Israel,* it vexed them to the heart; *The wicked shall see it and be grieved.*

When he began to act, they set themselves to hinder him, but in vain, *ver. 19, 20.* (1.) See here with what little reason the enemies discouraged them. They represented the undertaking as a silly thing, they *laughed us to scorn,* and *despised us* as foolish builders, that could not finish what we began. And as an ill thing, no better than treason, *will ye rebel against the king?* Because this was the old invidious charge, tho' now they had a commission from the king, and were taken under his protection, yet still they must be called rebels. (2.) See also with what good reason they slighted these discouragements. They bear up themselves with this, that they were the *servants of the God of heaven,* the only true and living God, that they were acting for him in what they did, and that therefore he would bear them out, and prosper them, tho' the heathen raged, *Psal. ii. 1.* They consider also, that the reason why these enemies did so malign them, was, because they had no right in Jerusalem, but envied them their right in it. Thus may the impotent menaces of the church's enemies be easily despised by the church's friends.

## C H A P. III.

*Saying and doing are often two things; many are ready to say, Let us rise up and build, who sit still and do nothing; like that fair-spoken son who said, I go, Sir, but went not; the undertakers here were none of those. As soon as they had resolved to build the wall about Jerusalem, they lost no time, but set about it presently, as we find in this chapter. Let it never be said we left that good work to be done to-morrow, which we might as well have done to-day. This chapter gives an account of two things, (1.) The names of the builders which are recorded here to their honour, for they were such as herein discovered a great zeal for God and their country; both a pious and a publick spirit: a great degree both of industry and courage: and what they did was fit to be thus largely registred both for their praise, and for the encouragement of others to follow their example. (2.) The order of the building, they took it before them, and ended where they began. They repaired, (1.) from the sheep-gate to the fish-gate, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) Thence to the old-gate, *ver. 3—5.* (3.) Thence to the valley-gate, *ver. 6—12.* (4.) Thence to the dung-gate, *ver. 13.* (5.) Thence to the gate of the fountain, *ver. 14.* (6.) Thence to the water-gate, *ver. 15—26.* (7.) Thence by the horse-gate to the sheep-gate again whence they began, *ver. 27—32.* and so they brought their work quite round the city.*

1. **T**HEN Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they built the sheep-gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel. 2. And next unto him builded the men of Jericho: and next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri. 3. But the fish-gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 4. And next unto them repaired Merimoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz: and next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel: and next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana. 5. And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord. 6. Moreover, the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 7. And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Merothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governour on this side the river. 8. Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths: next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. 9. And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem. 10. And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house: and next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah. 11. Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahath-moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces. 12. And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloheh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters. 13. The valley-gate repaired Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung-gate. 14. But the dung-gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem: he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 15. But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah: he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the kings garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David. 16. After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty. 17. After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani: next unto him repaired Hashabiah the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part. 18. After him repaired



paired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah. 19. And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury, at the turning of the wall. 20. After him Baruch the son of Zabbai, earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall, unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21. After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib, even to the end of the house of Eliashib. 22. And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain. 23. After him repaired Benjamin, and Hashub, over against their house: after him repaired Azariah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, by his house. 24. After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad, another piece, from the house of Azariah, unto the turning of the wall, even unto the corner. 25. Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning of the wall, and the tower which lieth out from the kings high house, that was by the court of the prison: after him, Pedaiiah the son of Parosh. 26. Moreover, the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water-gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out. 27. After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel. 28. From above the horse-gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house. 29. After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer, over against his house: after him repaired also Shemaiah, the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. 30. After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece: after him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, over against his chamber. 31. After him repaired Malchiah, the goldsmiths son, unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner. 32. And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep-gate, repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

The best way to know how to divide this chapter, is to observe how the work was divided among the undertakers, that every one might know what he had to do, and mind it accordingly with a holy emulation, and desire to excel, yet without any contention, animosity, or separate interest. No strife appears among them, but which should do most for the publick good.

Several things are observable in the account here given of the building of the wall about Jerusalem.

1. That Eliashib the high-priest, with his brethren the priests, led the van in this troop of builders, ver. 1. Ministers should be first and foremost in every good work, for their office obligeth them to teach and quicken by their example, as well as by their doctrine. If there be labour in it, who so fit as they to work? If danger, who so fit as they to venture? The dignity of the high-priest was very great, and obliged him to signalize himself in this service. The priests repaired the sheep-gate so called, because through it the sheep were brought that were to be sacrificed in the temple, and therefore the priests undertook the repair of it, whose inheritance the offerings of the Lord made by fire were. And of this gate only, it is said that they sanctified it with the word and prayer, and perhaps with sacrifices; either (1.) Because it led to the temple; or, (2.) Because with this the building of the wall began, and it is probable (tho' they were at work in all parts of the wall at the same time) this was first finished, and therefore at this gate they solemnly committed their city and the walls of it to the divine protection. Or, (3.) Because the priests were the builders of it, and it becomes ministers above others, being themselves in a peculiar manner sanctified to God, to sanctify to him all their performances, and to do even their common actions after a godly sort.

2. That the undertakers were very many, who each took their share, some more and some less, in this work, according as their ability was. Note, What is to be done for the publick good, every one should assist in and further, to the utmost of his place and power; united force will conquer that which no one dares venture on. Many hands will make light work.

3. That many were active in this work who were not themselves inhabitants of Jerusalem, and therefore consulted purely the publick welfare, and not any private interest or advantage of their own. Here is the men of Jericho with the first, ver. 2. the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, ver. 7. and Zanoah, ver. 13. Every Israelite should lend a hand towards the building up of Jerusalem.

4. That several rulers both of Jerusalem and of other cities were active in this work, thinking themselves bound in honour to do the utmost that their wealth and power enabled them to do

for the furtherance of this good work. But it is observable they are called rulers of part, or the half part, of their respective cities. As one that was ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, ver. 12. Another of part of Beth-haccerem, ver. 14. Another of part of Mizpah, ver. 15. Another of the half part of Beth-zur, ver. 16. One that was ruler of one half part, and another of the other half part of Keilah, ver. 17, 18. Perhaps the Persian government would not intrust any one with a strong city, but appointed two to be a watch upon each other. Rome had two consuls.

5. Here is a just reproach fastened upon the nobles of Tekoa, that they put not their necks to the work of their Lord, ver. 5. i. e. they would not come under the yoke of an obligation to this service; as if the dignity and liberty of their peerage were their discharge from serving God and doing good, which is indeed the highest honour and the truest freedom. Let not nobles think any thing below them, by which they may advance the interests of their country, for what else is their nobility good for, but that it puts them in a higher and larger sphere of usefulness, than that in which inferior persons move.

6. Two undertakers joined in repairing the old gate, ver. 6. and so were co-founders, and shared the honour of it between them. The good work we cannot compass our selves, we must be thankful to those that will go partners with us in. Some think this is called the old-gate, because remaining of the ancient Salem, and said to be first built by Melchizedek.

7. Several good honest tradesmen, as well as priests and rulers, were active in this work, goldsmiths, apothecaries, merchants, ver. 8, 32. They did not think their callings excused them, nor plead that they could not leave their shops to attend the publick business, knowing that what they lost would certainly be made up to them by the blessing of God upon their callings.

8. Some ladies are spoken of as helping forward this work, Shallum and his daughters, ver. 12. who tho' not capable of personal service, yet having their portions in their own hands, or being rich widows, contributed money for buying materials, and paying workmen. St Paul speaks of some good women that laboured with him in the gospel, Phil. iv. 3.

9. Of some it is said, that they repaired over against their houses, ver. 10, 23, 28, 29. and of one who, it is likely, was only a lodger, that he repaired over against his chamber, ver. 30. When a general good work is to be done, each should apply themselves to that part of it that falls nearest them, and within their reach. If every one will sweep before his own door, the street will be clean; if every one will mend one, we shall be all mended. If he that has but a chamber will repair before that, he doth his part.

10. Of one it is said, that he earnestly repaired that which fell to his share, ver. 20. with an inflamed zeal: not that others were cold or indifferent, but he was the most vigorous of any of them, and made himself remarkable for it. It is good to be thus zealously affected in a good thing; and it is probable, this good man's zeal provoked very many, to take the more pains and make the more haste.

11. Of one of these builders it is observed, that he was the sixth son of his father, ver. 30. His five elder brethren, it seems, laid not their hand to this work, but he did. In doing that which is good, we need not stay to see our betters go before us; if they decline it, it doth not therefore follow that we must. Thus the younger brother, if he be the better man, and doth God and his generation better service, is indeed the better gentleman; those are most honourable that are most useful.

12. Some of them that had first done helped their fellows, and undertook another share, where they saw there was most need. Meremoth repaired, ver. 4. and again, ver. 21. And the Tekoites, besides the piece they repaired, ver. 5. undertook another piece, ver. 27. which is the more remarkable, because their nobles set them an ill example by withdrawing from the service; which, instead of serving them for an excuse to sit still, perhaps made them the more forward to a double work, that by their zeal they might either shame or atone for the covetousness and carelessness of their nobles.

Lastly, Here is no mention of any particular share that Nehemiah himself had in this work. A name-fake of his is mentioned, ver. 16. But did he do nothing? yes, tho' he undertook not any particular piece of the wall, yet he did more than any of them, for he had the oversight of them all; half of his servants worked where there was most need, and the other half stood centinel, as we find after, chap. iv. 16. while he himself in his own person walked the rounds, directed and encouraged the builders, set his hand to the work where he saw occasion, and kept a watchful eye upon the motions of the enemy, as we shall find in the next chapter. The pilot needs not hale at a rope, it is enough for him to steer.





## C H A P. IV.

*We left all hands at work for the buiding of the wall about Jerusalem. But such good work doth not use to be carried on without opposition; now here we are told what opposition was given to it, and what methods Nehemiah betook to forward the work notwithstanding that opposition. (1.) Their enemies reproached and ridiculed their undertaking; but their scoffs they answered with prayers, heeded them not, but went on with their work notwithstanding, ver. 1—6. (2.) They formed a bloody design against them to hinder them by force of arms, ver. 7, 8, 10, 11, 12. And to guard against this, Nehemiah prayed, ver. 9. set guards, ver. 13. and encouraged them to fight, ver. 14. by which the design was broken, ver. 15. and so the work was carried on with all needful precaution against a surprize, ver. 16—23. In all this Nehemiah approved himself a man of great conduct and courage, as well as great piety.*

1. **B**UT it came to pass that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. 2. And he spake before his brethren, and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortifie themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? 3. Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone-wall. 4. Hear, O our God, for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: 5. And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. 6. So built we the wall; and all the wall was joyned together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

Here is, 1. The spiteful scornful reflection which Sanballat and Tobiah cast upon the Jews, for their attempt to build the wall about Jerusalem. The country rang of it presently; intelligence was brought of it to Samaria, that nest of enemies to the Jews and their prosperity, and here we are told how they received the tidings. (1.) In heart they were very angry at the undertaking, and had great indignation, ver. 1. It vexed them that Nehemiah came to seek their welfare, chap. ii. 10. but when they heard of this great undertaking for their good, they were out of all patience. They had hitherto pleased themselves with the thoughts that while Jerusalem was unwall'd, they could swallow it up, and make themselves masters of it when they pleased, but if it be walled, it will not only be fenced against them, but by degrees become formidable to them. The strength and safety of the church is the grief and vexation of its enemies. (2.) In word they despised it, and made it the subject of their ridicule, in which they did sufficiently spit their venom, but good was brought out of it, for looking upon it as a foolish undertaking that would sink under its own weight, they did not go about to obstruct it till it was too late. Let us see with what pride and malice they set themselves publickly to banter it. (1.) Sanballat speaks with scorn of the workmen, those feeble Jews, ver. 2. What will they do for materials? will they revive the stones out of the rubbish! And what mean they to be so hasty? do they think to make the walling of a city but one day's work? and to keep the feast of dedication with sacrifice the next day? Poor silly people! see how ridiculous they make themselves! (2.) Tobiah speaks with no less scorn of the work it self. He has his flout too, and must shew his wit, ver. 3. Profane scoffers sharpen one another. Sorry work (saith he) they are like to make of it, they themselves will be ashamed of it, if a fox go up, not with the subtilty, but with his weight; he will break down their stone-wall. Many a good work has been thus looked upon with contempt by the proud and haughty scornors.

2. Nehemiah's humble and devout address to God; when he heard of these reflections. He had notice brought him what they said, it is probable they themselves sent him a message to this purpose to discourage him, hoping to jeer him out of his attempt, but he did not answer these fools according to their folly, did not upbraid them with their weakness, but looked up to God by prayer. (1.) He begs of God to take notice of the indignities that were done them, ver. 4. and in this we are to imitate him. Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Note, 1. God's people have oft been a despised people, and loaded with contempt. 2. God doth and will hear all the slights that are put upon his people, and it is their comfort that he doth so, and a good reason why they should be as deaf, Psal. xxxviii. 13, 15. Thou art our God to whom we appeal, our cause needs no more but a fair hearing. (2.) He begs of God to avenge their cause, and turn the

reproach upon the enemies themselves, ver. 4, 5. and this was spoken rather by a spirit of prophecy than by a spirit of prayer; and is not to be imitated by us who are taught of Christ to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us; Christ himself prayed for those that reproached him, Father, forgive them, Nehemiah here prays, cover not their iniquity. Note, 1. They that cast contempt on God's people do but prepare everlasting shame for themselves. 2. It is a sin from which sinners are seldom recovered. Doubtless, Nehemiah had reason to think the hearts of those sinners were desperately hardened, so that they would never repent of it, else he would not have prayed that it might never be blotted out. The reason he gives is, not they have abused us, but they have provoked thee, and that before the builders, to whom, it is likely, they sent a spiteful message. Note, Therefore we should be angry at the malice of persecutors, not because it is abusive to us, but because it is offensive to God, and on that we may ground an expectation that God will appear against it, Psal. lxxiv. 18, 22.

3. The vigour of the builders notwithstanding these reflections, ver. 6. They made such good speed that in a little time they had run up the wall to half its height; for the people had a mind to work, their hearts were upon it, and they would have it forward. Note, 1. Then good work goes on well, when people have a mind to it. 2. The reproaches of enemies should rather quicken us to our duty than drive us from it.

7. ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, 8. And conspired all of them together, to come and to fight against Jerusalem; and to hinder it. 9. Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. 10. And Judah said; The strength of the bearers of burthens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall. 11. And our adversaries said; They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12. And it came to pass that when the Jews which dwelt by them, came, they said unto us ten times; From all places, whence ye shall return unto us; they will be upon you. 13. ¶ Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. 15. And it came to pass when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought; that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

We have here;

1. The conspiracy which the Jews enemies formed against them, to stay the building by slaying the builders. The conspirators were not only Sanballat and Tobiah, but other neighbouring people whom they had drawn into the plot. They flattered themselves with a fancy that the work should soon stand still of it self but when they heard that it went on and prospered, they were angry at the Jews for being so hasty to push the work forward, and angry at themselves for being so slow in opposing it, ver. 7. they were very wroth. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath for it was cruel. Nothing would serve but they would fight against Jerusalem, ver. 8. Why, what quarrel had they with the Jews? had they done them any wrong? or did they design them any? no, they lived peaceably by them; but it was merely out of envy and malice; they hated the Jews piety, and were therefore vexed at their prosperity, and sought their ruin. Observe (1.) How unanimous they were; They conspired all of them together, tho' of different interests among themselves, yet one in their opposition to the work of God. (2.) How close they were; they said, they shall not know, neither see, till we have them at our mercy. Thus they took crafty counsel, and digged deep to hide it from the Lord, and promised themselves security and success from the secrecy of their management. (3.) How cruel they were; we will come and slay them. If nothing less than the murder of the workmen will put a stop to the work, they will not flick at that; nay, it is their blood they thirst for, and they are glad of any pretence to glut themselves with it. (4.) What the design was, and how confident they were of success; it was to cause the work to cease, ver. 11. and this they doubted not but to effect. The hindring of good work is that which



which bad men aim at and promise themselves; but good work is God's work, and it shall prosper.

2. The discouragements which the builders themselves laboured under. At the same time when the adversaries said, let us *cause the work to cease*, Judah said, let us even let it fall, for we are not able to go forward with it, *ver. 10.* They represent the labourers tired off their legs, and the remaining difficulties insuperable, even of that first part of their work the removing of the rubbish, and therefore think it adviseable to desist for the present; can Judah that warlike valiant tribe sneak thus? Active leading men have many times as much ado to grapple with the fears of their friends, as with the terrors of their enemies.

3. The information that was brought to Nehemiah of the enemies designs, *ver. 12.* There were *Jews that dwell by them*, in the country, who tho' they had not zeal enough to bring them to Jerusalem to help their brethren in building the wall, yet having by their situation opportunity to discover the enemies motions, they had so much honesty and affection to the cause, as to give intelligence of it; nay, that it might be the more credited, they came themselves to give notice of it; and they said it ten times, repeating it as men in earnest, and under a concern, and the report was confirmed by many witnesses; the intelligence they gave is expressed abruptly, and finds work for the critics to make out the sense of it; which perhaps is designed to intimate, that they gave this intelligence, as men out of breath and in confusion, whose very looks would make up the deficiencies of their words: I think it may be read without any supply, *whatever place ye turn to, they are against us*, so that you have need to be upon your guard on all sides. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light, and so bringing to nought the devices and designs of his and his church's enemies: even the cold and feeble Jews that contentedly dwell by them, shall be made to serve as spies upon them, nay, rather than fail, *a bird of the air shall carry their voice.*

4. The pious and prudent methods which Nehemiah hereupon took to baffle the design, and to secure his work and workmen; it is said, *ver. 14. he looked.* (1.) He looked up, engaged God for him, and put himself and his cause under the divine protection, *ver. 9. we made our prayer unto God.* That was the way of this good man, and should be our way; all his cares, all his griefs, all his fears, he spread before God, and thereby made himself easy. This was the first thing he did; before he used any means, he made his prayer to God, for with him we must always begin. (2.) He looked about him. Having prayed he *set a watch against them.* The instructions Christ has given us in our spiritual warfare agree with this example, *Mat. xxvi. 41. Watch and pray.* If we think to secure our selves by prayer only without watchfulness, we are slothful and tempt God. If by watchfulness without prayer, we are proud and slight God; and either way we forfeit his protection.

Observe, (1.) How he posted the guards, *ver. 13.* In the lower places he set them behind the wall, that they might annoy the enemy over it, as a breast-work, but in the higher places, where the wall was raised to its full height, he set them upon it, that from the top of it they might throw down stones or darts upon the heads of the assailants; he set them after their families, that mutual relation might engage them to mutual assistance. (2.) How he animated and encouraged them, *ver. 14.* He observed even the nobles and rulers themselves, as well as the rest of the people to be under a great consternation upon the intelligence that was brought them, and ready to say, they were all undone, by which their hands were weakened both for work and war, and therefore he endeavours to silence their fears; come (saith he) *be not afraid of them*, but behave your selves valiantly, considering, (1.) Who you fight under; you cannot have a better captain, *remember the Lord who is great and terrible*, you think your enemies *great and terrible*, but what are they in comparison with God, especially in opposition to him; he is great above them to control them, and will be terrible to them when he comes to reckon with them. Those that with an eye of faith see the church's God great and terrible, will see the church's enemies mean and despicable. The reigning fear of God is the best antidote against the ensnaring fear of man. He that is afraid of *a man that shall die*, forgets *the Lord his maker*, *Isa. li. 12, 13.* (2.) Who you fight for, you cannot have a better cause, you fight for *your brethren* (*Psal. cxxii. 8.*) *your sons and your daughters.* All that is dear to you in this world lies at stake, therefore *behave your selves valiantly.*

5. The happy disappointment which this gave to the enemy, *ver. 15.* When they found their design was discovered, and that the Jews were upon their guard, they concluded it was to no purpose to attempt any thing, but that *God had brought their counsel to nought.* They knew they could not gain their point but by surprize, and if their plot was known, it was quashed. The Jews hereupon *returned every one to his work*, with so much the more cheerfulness, because they saw plainly that God owned it, and owned them in the doing of it. Note, God's care of our safety, should engage and encourage us to go on with vigour in our duty. As soon as ever a danger is over, let us *return to our work*, and trust God another time.

16. And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. 17. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon. 18. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *so* builded: and he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me. 19. ¶ And I said unto the nobles and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. 20. In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. 21. So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears, from the rising of the morning, till the stars appeared. 22. Likewise at the same time, said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant, lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. 23. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, *saving that every one put them off for washing.*

When the builders had so far reason to think the design of the enemies broken, as to *return to their work*, yet they were not so secure as to lay down their arms, knowing how restless and unwearied they were in their attempts, and if one design failed they would be hatching another. Thus must we watch always against our spiritual enemies, and not expect that our warfare will be accomplished till our work is. See what course Nehemiah took that the people might hold themselves in a readiness, in case there should be an attack.

1. While one half was at work, the other half was under their arms, holding *spears, and shields, and bows*, not only for themselves, but for the labourers too, who would immediately quit their work, and betake themselves to their weapons upon the first alarm, *ver. 16.* And it is probable, they changed services at such and such hours, which would relieve the fatigue of both, and particularly would be an ease to the *bearers of burthens*, whose *strength* was *decayed*, *ver. 10.* while they held the weapons they were eased and yet not idle. They thus dividing their time between the trowels and the spears, are said to *work with one hand*, and held their weapons *with the other*, *ver. 17.* which cannot be understood literally, for the work would require both hands, but it intimates that they were equally employed in both. Thus must we work out our salvation with the *weapons of our warfare* in our hand, for in every duty we must expect to meet with opposition from our spiritual enemies, against whom we must still be *fighting the good fight of faith.*

2. Every builder has a sword by his side, *ver. 18.* that he could carry without hindring his labour. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, which we ought to have always at hand, and never to seek, both in our labours, and in our conflicts as christians.

3. Care was taken both to get and to give early notice of the approach of the enemy, in case they should endeavour to surprize them. Nehemiah kept a trumpeter always by him to sound an alarm upon the first intimation of danger. The work was large, and the builders were dispersed, for in all parts of the wall, they were labouring at the same time. Nehemiah continually walked round to oversee the work and encourage the workmen, and so would have speedy intelligence if the enemy made an attack, of which by sound of trumpet he would soon give notice to all, and they must immediately repair to him, with a full assurance that their *God would fight for them*, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* When they acted as workmen, it was requisite they should be dispersed wherever there was work to do, but when as soldiers, it was requisite they should come into close order, and be found in a body. Thus should the labourers in Christ's building be ready to unite against a common foe.

4. The inhabitants of the villages were ordered to lodge within Jerusalem, with their servants, not only that they might be the nearer to their work in the morning, but that they might be ready to help in case of an attack in the night, *ver. 22.* The strength of a city lies more in its hands than in its walls, secure them and God's blessing upon them, and be secure.

5. Nehemiah himself and all his men kept close to their business. The spears were held up with the sight of them to terrify the enemy, not only from sun to sun, but from twilight to twilight every day, *ver. 21.* Thus ought we to be always upon our guard against our spiritual enemies, not only (as here) while it is *light*, but when it is *dark*, for they are the *rulers of the darkness of this world.* Nay, so very intent was Nehemiah upon his work, and so fast did he hold his servants to it, that while the heat of the



the business lasted; neither he himself nor his attendants went into bed, but every night lay and slept in their clothes, *ver.* 23. except that they shifted them now and then, either for cleanliness, or in a case of ceremonial pollution. It was a sign their heart was upon their work, when they could not find time to dress and undress, but resolved they would be at all times ready for service. Then good work is likely to go on successfully, when those that labour in it thus make a business of it.

## C H A P. V.

*How bravely Nehemiah, as a wife and faithful governor, stood upon his guard against the attacks of enemies abroad, we read in the foregoing chapter. Here we have him no less bold and active to redress grievances at home, and having kept them from being destroyed by their enemies, to keep them from destroying one another. Here is, (1.) The complaint which the poor made to him, of the great hardships which the rich (of whom they were forced to borrow money) put upon them, ver. 1—5. (2.) The effectual course which Nehemiah took both to reform the oppressors, and to relieve the oppressed, ver. 6—13. (3.) The good example which he himself, as governor, set them of compassion and tenderness, ver. 14—19.*

1. **A**ND there was a great cry of the people, and of their wives, against their brethren the Jews. 2. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat and live. 3. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters, to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already, neither is it in our power to redeem them: for other men have our lands and vineyards.

We have here the tears of the oppressed, which Solomon considered, *Eccles.* iv. 1. And let us consider them as here they are dropped before Nehemiah, whose office it was, as governor, to deliver the poor and needy, and rid them out of the hand of the wicked oppressors, *Psal.* lxxxii. 4. Hard times, and hard hearts, made the poor miserable.

1. The times they lived in were hard. There was a dearth of corn, *ver.* 3. probably for want of rain, with which God had chastised their neglect of his house, *Hag.* i. 11. and the non-payment of their church dues, *Mal.* iii. 9, 10. Thus foolish sinful men bring God's judgments upon themselves, and then fret and complain of them. When the markets are high, and provisions scarce and dear, the poor soon feel from it, and are pinched by it. Blessed be God for the mercy, and God deliver us from the sin of *fulness of bread*, *Ezek.* xvi. 49. That which made the scarcity here complained of the more grievous, was, that their sons and their daughters were many, *ver.* 2. The families that were most necessitous were most numerous; here were the mouths, but where was the meat? Some have estates and no children to inherit them, others have children and no estates to leave them; those that have both have reason to be thankful, those that have neither may the better be content; those who have great families and little substance must learn to live by faith in God's providence and promise, and those who have little families and great substance, must make their abundance a supply for others want. But this was not all, as corn was dear, so the taxes were high; the king's tribute must be paid, *ver.* 4. This mark of their captivity still remained upon them. Perhaps it was a poll-money that was required, and then their sons and their daughters being many, it rose the higher. The more they had to maintain (a hard case!) the more they had to pay. Now it seems they had not wherewithal of their own to buy corn, and pay taxes, but were necessitated to borrow. Their families came poor out of Babylon, they had been at great expence in building them houses, and had not yet (as we say) got up their backs, when these new burthens came upon them. The straits of poor house-keepers that make hard shift to get an honest livelihood, and sometimes want what is fitting for them and their families, are well worthy the compassionate consideration of those, that either with their wealth, or with their power, are in a capacity to help them.

2. The persons they dealt with were hard. Money must be had, but it must be borrowed, and they that lent them money, taking advantage of their necessity, were very hard upon them, and made a prey of them. (1.) They exacted interest from them at twelve *per cent.* the hundredth part every month, *ver.* 12. If men borrow large sums to trade with to increase their stocks, or purchase land, there is no reason but the lender should share with

the borrower in his profit, or if to spend upon their lusts, or repair what they have so spent, why should they not pay for their extravagances? But if the poor borrow to maintain their families, and we be able to help them, it is certain we ought either to lend freely what they have occasion for, or (if they be not likely to repay it) to give freely something towards it. Nay, (2.) They forced them to mortgage to them their lands and houses for the securing of the money, *ver.* 3. and not only so, but took the profits of them for interest, (*ver.* 5. compare *ver.* 11.) that by degrees they might make themselves masters of all they had. Yet this was not the worst; (3.) They took their children for bond-servants, to be enslaved or sold at pleasure, *ver.* 5. This they complain of most sensibly, as that which touched them in a tender part, and aggravate it with this, *our children are as their children*, as dear to us as theirs to them; not only of the same human nature, and entitled to the honours and liberties of that, (*Mal.* ii. 10. *Job* xxxi. 15.) but of the same holy nation, free-born Israelites, and dignified with the same privileges. Our flesh carries in it the sacred seal of the covenant of circumcision, as well as the flesh of our brethren, yet our heirs must be their slaves, and it is not in our power to redeem them. This they make a humble remonstrance of to Nehemiah, not only because they saw he was a great man that could relieve them, but a good man that would. Whither should the injured poor flee for succour but to the shields of the earth? whither but to the chancery; to the charity in the royal breast, and those deputed by it, for relief against the *summum jus*, the extremity of the law.

We will leave Nehemiah hearing the complaint, and enquiring into the truth of the complainants allegations (for the clamours of the poor are not always just) while we sit down and look, (1.) With a gracious compassion upon the oppressed, and lament the hardships which many in the world are groaning under, putting our souls into their souls stead, and remembering in our prayers and succours them that are burthened, as burthened with them. (2.) With a gracious indignation at the oppressors, and envy against their pride and cruelty, who drink the tears, the blood of those they have under their feet. But let those who shew no mercy, expect judgment without mercy. It was an aggravation of the sin of these oppressing Jews, that they were themselves so lately delivered out of the house of bondage, which obliged them in gratitude to undo the heavy burthen, *Isa.* lviii. 6.

6. ¶ And I was very angry, when I heard their cry, and these words. 7. Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles and the rulers, and said unto them, You exact usury every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. 8. And I said unto them, We, after our ability, have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will you even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9. Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? 10. I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants might exact of them money and corn: I pray you let us leave off this usury. 11. Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine and the oyl, that ye exact of them. 12. Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. 13. Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

It should seem the foregoing complaint was made to Nehemiah, at the time when he had his head and hands, as full as possible of the publick business about building the wall; yet perceiving it to be just, he did not reject it because it was unreasonable; did not chide the petitioners nor fall into a passion with them for disturbing him, when they saw how much he had to do; a fault which men of business are too often guilty of: no, nor did he so much as adjourn the hearing of the causes or proceedings upon it till he had more leisure. The case called for speedy interposal, and therefore he applied himself immediately to the consideration of it, knowing that let him build Jerusalem's walls never so high, so thick, so strong, the city could not be safe while such abuses as these were tolerated.

Now observe, What method he took for the redress of this grievance, which was so threatening to the publick.



1. He *was very angry*, ver. 6. he expressed a great displeasure at it, as a very ill thing. Note, It well becomes rulers to shew themselves angry at sin, that by the anger itself, they may be excited to their duty, and by the expressions of it others may be deterred from ill.

2. He *consulted with himself*, ver. 7. By this it appears his anger was not excessive, but kept within bounds, that tho' his spirit was provoked, he did not say or do any thing unadvisedly. Before he rebuked the nobles, he consulted with himself what to say, and when, and how. Note, Reproofs must be given with great consideration, that what is well meant may not come short of its end, for want of being well managed: It is the *reproof of instruction* that *giveth life*. Even wise men lose the benefit of their wisdom, sometimes for want of consulting with themselves, and taking time to deliberate.

3. He *rebuked the nobles and rulers*, who were the moneyed men, and whose power perhaps, made them the more bold to oppress. Note, Even nobles and rulers if they do that which is ill, ought to be told of it by proper persons. Let no man imagine that his dignity sets him above reproof.

4. He *set a great assembly against them*, called the people together to be witnesses of what he said, and to bear their testimony (which the people will generally be forward to do) against the oppressions and extortions their rulers were guilty of. Ezra and Nehemiah, were both of them very wise, good, useful men, yet in cases not unlike theirs, a great deal of difference between their management; when Ezra was told of the sin of the rulers in marrying strange wives, he rent his clothes and wept, and prayed, and was hardly persuaded to attempt a reformation, fearing it impracticable, for he was a man of a mild tender spirit; when Nehemiah was told of as ill a thing, he warmed presently, fell foul upon the delinquents, incensed the people against them, and never rested till, by all the rough methods he could use, he forced them to reform; for he was a man of a hot and eager spirit. Note, 1. Very holy men may differ much from each other in their natural temper, and in other things that result from it. 2. God's work may be done, well done, and successfully, and yet different methods taken in doing of it; which is a good reason why we should neither arraign others management, nor make our own a standard. There are diversities of operation, but the same Spirit.

5. He fairly reasoned the case with them, and shewed them the evil of what they did; the regular way of reforming mens lives, is to endeavour in the first place to convince their consciences. Several things he offered to their consideration, which are so pertinent and just, that it appeared he had consulted with himself. He lays it before them, (1.) That those whom they oppressed were their brethren, *you exact every one of his brother*; it was bad enough to oppress strangers, but much worse to oppress their poor brethren, from whom the divine law did not allow them to *take any usury*, Deut. xxiii. 19, 20. (2.) That they were but lately redeemed out of the hand of the heathen, the body of the people was so by the wonderful providence of God, some particular persons among them were so, who besides their share in the general captivity, were in servitude to heathen masters, and ransomed at the charge of Nehemiah and other pious and well-disposed persons: now, saith he, have we taken all this pains to get their liberty out of the hands of the heathen, and shall their own rulers enslave them? What an absurd thing is this! Must we be at the same trouble and expence to redeem them from you, as we were to redeem them from Babylon, ver. 8. Those whom God by his grace has made free, ought not to be again brought under a *yoke of bondage*, Gal. v. 1. 1 Cor. vii. 23. (3.) That it was a great sin thus to oppress the poor, ver. 9. *It is not good that ye do*, tho' you get money by it, you contract guilt by it, and *ought ye not to walk in the fear of God?* Certainly you ought, for you profess religion, and relation to him: and if you do, you would not be either covetous of worldly gain, or cruel towards your brethren. They that walk in the fear of God will not dare to do an ill thing, Job xxxi. 13, 14, 23. (4.) That it was a great scandal, and a reproach to their profession; consider *the reproach of the heathen our enemies*, enemies to us, to our God, and to our holy religion. They will be glad of any occasion to speak against us, and this will give them great occasion; they will say, these Jews that profess so much devotion to God, see how barbarous they are one to another. Note, 1. All that profess religion should be very careful that they do nothing to expose themselves to the reproach of them that are without, lest religion be wounded thro' their sides. 2. Nothing exposes religion more to the reproach of its enemies, than the worldliness and hard-heartedness of the professors of it. (5.) That he himself had set them a better example, ver. 10. which he enlargeth upon afterwards, ver. 14, &c. They that rigorously insist upon their right themselves will with a very ill grace persuade others to recede from theirs.

6. He earnestly pressed them not only not to make their poor neighbours any more such hard bargains, but to restore that which they had got into their hands, ver. 11. See how familiarly he speaks to them, *let us leave off this usury*, putting himself in, as becomes reprovers, tho' far from being any way guilty of the crime. See how earnestly and yet humbly he persuades

them, *I pray you leave off*; and *I pray you restore*; tho' he had authority to command, yet *for love's sake he rather beseeches*. See how particularly he presseth them to be kind to the poor, give them up their mortgages, put them again in possession of their estates, remit the interest, and give them time to pay in the principal. He urged them to their loss, yet urging them to their duty, it would be at length to their advantage. What we charitably forgive will be remembered and recompensed, as well as what we charitably give.

7. He laid them under all the obligations possible, to do what he pressed them to. (1.) He got a promise from them, ver. 12. *we will restore them*. (2.) He sent for the priests to give them their oath, that they would perform this promise; now their convictions were strong, and they seemed resolved, he would keep them to it. (3.) He bound them by a solemn curse or execration, hoping that would strike some awe upon them, *so let God shake out every man that performeth not this promise*, ver. 13. This was a threatening that he would certainly do so, to which the people said Amen, as to those curses at mount Ebal, Deut. xxvii. That their throats might be cut with their own tongues, if they should falsify their engagement, and that by the dread of that, they might be kept to their promise; with this Amen the people *praised the Lord*, so far were they from promising with regret, that they promised with all expressions possible of joy and thankfulness. Thus David, when he took God's vows upon him, *sang and gave praise*, Psal. lvi. 12. This here was well; but that which follows was better; they *did according to this promise*, and stuck to what they had done, not as their ancestors in a like case, who re-enslaved those whom a little before they had released, Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11, 18. Good promises are good things, but good performances are all in all.

14. ¶ Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governour in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year, even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that is*, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governour. 15. But the former governours that *had been* before me, were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekles of silver, yea even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. 16. Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants *were* gathered thither unto the work: 17. Moreover, *there were* at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that *are* about us. 18. Now *that* which was prepared *for me* daily, *was* one ox, and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governour, because the bondage was heavy upon this people. 19. Think upon me, my God, for good, *according* to all that I have done for this people.

Nehemiah had mentioned his own practice, as an inducement to the nobles not to burthen the poor, no not with just demands; here he relates more particularly what his practice was, not in pride or vain-glory, or to pass a compliment upon himself, but as an inducement both to his successors, and to the inferior magistrates, to be as tender as might be of the peoples ease.

1. He intimates what had been the way of his predecessors, ver. 15. He doth not name them, because what he had to say of them was not to their honour, and in such a case it is good to spare names; but the people knew how chargeable they had been, and how dear the country paid for all the benefit of their government. The government allows them forty shekels of silver, which was near five pound, so much a day (it is probable) but besides that, they obliged the people to furnish them with bread and wine, insisting upon it as perquisites of their office, and not only so, but they suffered their servants to squeeze the people, and to get all they could out of them. Note, 1. It is no new thing, for those who are in publick places to seek themselves more than the publick welfare, nay and to serve themselves upon the publick loss. 2. Masters must be accountable for all the acts of fraud and injustice, violence and oppression, which they connive at in their servants.

2. He tells us what had been his way. In general, he had not done as the former governors did, he would not, he durst not, *because of the fear of God*. He had an awe of God's majesty, and a dread of his wrath. And, (1.) That restrained him from oppressing the people; those that truly fear God, will not dare to do any thing cruel or unjust. (2.) It was purely that which restrained him: he was thus generous, not that he might have praise of men, or serve a turn by his interest in the people, but purely for conscience sake, because of the fear of God; that will not



not only be a powerful, but an acceptable principle both of justice and charity. What a good hand his predecessors made of their place, appeared by the estates they raised, but Nehemiah for his part got nothing, but the satisfaction of doing good, *neither bought we any land*, ver. 16. Say not then he was an ill husband, but then he was a good governor, who aimed not to feather his own nest.

Let us remember the words of our Lord, how he said, *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35. And observe here, (1.) How little Nehemiah received, of what he might have required, he did the work of the governor, but he did not *eat the bread of the governor*, ver. 14. did not require it, ver. 18. So far was he from extorting more than his due, that he never demanded that: but lived upon what he had got in the king of Persia's court, and his own estate in Judea, and the reason he gives for this piece of self-denial is, *because the bondage was heavy upon the people*. He might have used the common excuse for rigour in such cases, that it would be a wrong to his successors not to demand his dues, but let them look to themselves, he considers the present state of the Jews, and while they groaned under so much hardship, he could not find in his heart to add to their burthen, but would rather lessen his own estate than ruin them. Note, In our demands, we must consider not only the justice of them, but the ability of those on whom we make them; where there is nothing to be had, we know who loses his right. (2.) How much he gave, which he might have withheld. 1. His *servants work*, ver. 16. The servants of princes think themselves excused from labour, but Nehemiah's servants, by his order no doubt, were *all gathered to the work*. Those that have many servants, should contrive how they may do good with them, and keep them well employed. 2. His *own meat*, ver. 17, 18. He kept a very good table, not on certain days, but constantly; he had many honourable guests, at least one hundred and fifty of his own countrymen, persons of the first rank, besides strangers that came to him upon business: and he had plentiful provisions for his guests, beef, and mutton, and fowl, and all sorts of wine. Let those in publick places, remember that they were preferred to do good, not to enrich themselves, and let lesser people learn to *use hospitality one to another without grudging*, 1 Pet. iv. 9.

Lastly, He concludes with a prayer, ver. 19. *Think upon me, my God, for good*. (1.) Nehemiah here mentions what he had *done for this people*, not in pride, as boasting of himself, nor in passion, as upbraiding them, nor doth it appear that he had occasion to do it in his own vindication, as Paul had to relate his like self-denying tenderness of the Corinthians, but to shame the rulers out of their oppressions; let them learn of him to be neither greedy in their demands, nor paltry in their expences, and then they would have the credit and comfort of it as he had. (2.) He mentions it to God, in prayer, not as if he thought he had hereby merited any favour from God, as a debt, but to shew that he looked not for any recompence of his generosity from men, but depended upon God only to make up to him, what he had lost and laid out for his honour; and he reckoned the favour of God reward enough; if God do but *think upon me for good*, I have enough. His thoughts to us-ward, are our happiness, *Psal. xl. 5*. He refers himself to God to recompense him in such a manner as he pleased; if men forget me, let my God think on me, and I desire no more.

## C H A P. VI.

*The cries of oppressed poverty being stilled, we are now to enquire how the building of the wall goes forward, and in this chapter we find it carried on with vigour, and finished with joy, notwithstanding the restless attempts of the gates of hell to hinder it. How the Jews enemies were baffled in their design, to put a stop to it by force, we read before, chap. iv. Here we find how their endeavours to drive Nehemiah off from it were frustrated. (1.) When they courted him to an interview, with design to do him a mischief, he would not stir, ver. 1—4. (2.) When they would have made him believe his undertaking was represented as seditious and treasonable, he regarded not the insinuation, ver. 5—9. (3.) When they hired pretended prophets to advise him to retire into the temple for his own safety, still he kept his ground, ver. 10—14. (4.) Notwithstanding the secret correspondence that was kept up, between them and some false and treacherous Jews, the work was finished in a short time, ver. 15—19. Such as these were the struggles between the church and its enemies, but great is God's cause, and will be prosperous and victorious.*

1. **N**OW it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates) 2. That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, come, let us meet together in *some one of the villages* in the plain of Ono: but they thought to do me mischief. 3. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I

*I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it; and come down to you?* 4. Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. 5. Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me, in like manner, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand: 6. Wherein was written; it is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, *that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words*. 7. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, *There is a king in Judah*: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. 8. Then I sent unto him, saying, *There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart*. 9. For they all made us afraid, saying, *Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done*. Now therefore, *O God, strengthen my hands*.

Two plots upon Nehemiah we have here an account of; how cunningly they were laid by his enemies, and how happily frustrated by God's good providence, and his prudence.

1. A plot to trepan him into a snare. The enemies had an account of the good forwardness the work was in, that all the breaches of the wall were made up, so that they looked upon it as good as done; tho' at that time the *doors of the gates* were off the hinges, ver. 1. And therefore they must now or never, by one bold stroke take off Nehemiah; they heard how well guarded he was, so that there was no attacking him upon the spot, they will therefore try by all the arts of wheedling to get him among them. Observe, (1.) With what hellish subtilty they courted him to meet them, not in any city, lest that should have given umbrage to suspect that they intended to secure him, but in a village in the lot of Benjamin, *come let us meet together* to consult about the common interests of our provinces; or they would have him think that they coveted his friendship, and would be glad to be better acquainted with him, in order to a good understanding between them, and the settling a good correspondence. But they thought to do him a mischief; it is likely he had some secret intelligence given him, that they designed to imprison or murder him; or, he knew them so well, that without breach of charity, he concluded they aimed at his life, and therefore when they *spoke fair, he believed them not*. (2.) See with what heavenly wisdom he declined the motion. His *God did instruct him*, to give them that prudent answer, by messengers of his own, *I am doing a great work, am very busy, and am loth to let the work stand while I leave it to come down to you*, ver. 3. His care was that the work might not cease, he knew it would if he left it never so little, and *why should it cease while I come down to you?* He saith nothing of his jealousies, nor reproacheth them for their treacherous design, but gives them a good reason, and one of the true reasons why he would not come. Compliment must always give way to business. Let those that are tempted to idle merry meetings by their vain companions, thus answer the temptation, we have work to do, and must not neglect it. Four times they attacked him with the same sollicitation, and he as oft returned the same answer, which we may suppose was very vexatious to them, for really it was the ceasing of the work that they aimed at, and it would make them despair of breaking the undertaking, to see the undertaker so intent upon it. I answered them (saith he) after the same manner, ver. 4. Note, We must never suffer ourselves to be overcome by the greatest importunity to do any thing ill or imprudent; but when we are attacked with the same temptation, still resist it with the same reason and resolution.

2. A plot to terrify him from his work. Could they but drive him off, the work would cease of course. This therefore Sanballat attempts, but in vain. (1.) He endeavours to possess Nehemiah with an apprehension, that his undertaking to build the walls of Jerusalem was generally represented as factious and seditious, and would be resented accordingly at court, ver. 5, 6, 7. The best men, even in their most innocent and excellent performances have lain under this imputation. This is written to him in an open letter, as a thing generally known and talked of, that it was reported among the nations, and Gashmu will aver it for truth, that Nehemiah was aiming to make himself king, and to shake off the Persian yoke. Note, It is common for that which is the sense only of the malicious to be falsely represented by them, as the sense of the many. Now Sanballat pretends to inform Nehemiah of this, as a friend, that he might hasten to court to clear himself, or stay his proceedings, for fear they should be thus misconstrued; at least upon this surmise he urgeth him to give him the meeting, *let us take counsel together*, how to quell the report, hoping by this means either to take him off, or at least to take him off from his business. Thus were his words *softer than oil*, and yet *war was in his heart*, and he hoped, like Judas, to kiss and kill. But surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird, Nehemiah was soon aware what they aimed at, to *weaken their*



*their hands from the work*, ver. 9. and therefore not only denied that such things were true, but that they were reported; he was better known than to be thus suspected. (2.) Thus he escaped the snare, and kept his ground, nor would he be frightened by winds and clouds from sowing and reaping. Suppose it was thus reported, we must never omit known duty merely for fear it should be misconstrued, but while we keep a good conscience, let us trust God with our good name. But indeed it was not thus reported. God's people, tho' sufficiently loaded with reproach, yet are not really in so ill a name as some would have them thought to be in.

In the midst of his complaint of their malice, in endeavouring to frighten him, and so weaken his hands, he lifts up his heart to heaven in this short prayer, *now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands*. It is the great support and relief of good people, that in all their straits and difficulties they have a good God to go to, from whom by faith and prayer they may fetch in grace to silence their fears, and *strengthen their hands*, when their enemies are endeavouring to fill them with fears, and weaken their hands. When in our Christian work and warfare, we are entering upon any particular services or conflicts, this is a good prayer for us to put up, I have such a duty to do, such a temptation to grapple with, *now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands*. Some read it, not as a prayer, but as a holy resolution (for O God is supplied in our translation) *now therefore I will strengthen my hands*. Note, Christian fortitude will be sharpened by opposition. Every temptation to draw us from our duty, should quicken us so much the more to duty.

10. Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple; for they will come to slay thee, yea in the night will they come to slay thee. 11. And I said, should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. 12. And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. 14. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and on the prophets Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

The Jews enemies leave no stone unturned, no way untried to take Nehemiah off from building the wall about Jerusalem; in order to this they had tried to fetch him into the country to them, but in vain; now they try to drive him into the temple for his own safety; let him be any where but at his work. Observing him to be a cautious man, they will endeavour to gain their point by making him cowardly. Observe,

1. How basely the enemies managed this temptation.

(1.) That which they designed, was to bring Nehemiah to do a foolish thing, that they might laugh at him, and insult over him for doing it, and so lessen his interest and influence, ver. 13. *that I should be afraid*, and so they might have matter for an evil report, and might reproach me. This was indeed doing the devil's work, who is mens tempter, that he may be their accuser, draws men to sin, that he may glory in their shame. The greatest mischief our enemies can do us, is to frighten us from our duty, and bring us to do an ill thing.

(2.) The tools they made use of were a pretended prophet and prophets, whom they hired to persuade Nehemiah to quit his work, and retire for his own safety. The pretended prophet was Shemaiah, of whom it is said, that he was shut up in his own house, either under pretence of retirement for meditation and to consult the mind of God, or to give Nehemiah a sign in like manner to make himself a recluse. It should seem Nehemiah had a value for him, for he went to his house to consult with him, ver. 10. Other prophets there were, and one prophets, Noadiah, ver. 14. that were in the interest of the Jews enemies, pensioners to them, and traitors to their country. Whether they pretended to inspiration, doth not appear, they do not say, *thus saith the Lord*, as the false prophets of old did; if not so, yet they would be thought to excel in divine knowledge, and human prudence, and to have uncommon measures of insight and foresight, and were therefore consulted in difficult cases, as prophets had been. These the enemies feed'd to be of counsel for them. Let us hence take occasion to lament, (1.) The wickedness of such bad men as these prophets. That ever any should be so perfidious as to betray the cause of God and their country, even under the pretence of communion with God, and concern for their country. (2.) The unhappiness of such good men as Nehemiah, who are in danger of being imposed upon by such cheats, and to whom no temptation comes with more force than that which comes under a colour of religion, of revelation and devotion, and is brought by the hand of prophets.

(3.) The pretence was plausible. These prophets suggested to Nehemiah, that the enemies would come and slay him, in the night they would slay him, which he had reason enough to believe was true; they would if they could, if they durst. They pretended to be much concerned for his safety; they were all undone if any harm should come to him; and therefore they very gravely advised him to hide himself in the temple till the danger was over; that was a strong and sacred place, where he would be under the special protection of heaven, *Psal. xxvii. 5*. If Nehemiah had been prevailed with to do this, immediately the people would both have left off their work, and thrown down their arms, and every one would have shifted for his own safety; and then the enemies might easily, and without opposition, have demolished the works, broken down the wall again, and so gained their point. Tho' self-preservation is a fundamental principle of the law of nature, yet that is not always the best and wisest counsel which pretends to go upon that principle.

2. See how bravely Nehemiah vanquished this temptation; and came off a conqueror.

(1.) He immediately resolved not to yield to it, ver. 11. See here; (1.) What his reasonings are, *should such a man as I flee?* Shall I desert God's work, or discourage my own workmen, whom I have employed and encouraged? Shall I be over-credulous of report, and over-solicitous about my own life. I that am the governor, on whom so many eyes are, both of friends and foes; another might flee, but not I. *Who is there that being as I am*, in my post of honour, and power, and trust, would go into the temple, and sneak there when business is to be done, yea, tho' it were to save his life. Note, When we are tempted to sin, we should remember who, and what we are, that we may not do any thing unbecoming us, and the profession we make. *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, Prov. xxxi. 4*. (2.) What was the result of his reasonings, he is at a point, I will not go in, I will rather die at my work, than live in an inglorious retreat from it. Note, Holy courage and magnanimity will engage us whatever it cost us, never to decline a good work, nor ever to do an ill thing.

(2.) He presently was aware what was the rise of it, ver. 12. *I perceived that God had not sent him*, that he gave this advice not by any divine direction, ordinary or extraordinary, but with a design against me. The wickedness of such mercenary wretches will sooner or later be brought to light. Two things Nehemiah said he dreaded in that which he was advised to. (1.) Offending God: *that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin*. Note, Sin is that which above any thing we should dread; and a good preservative it is against sin, to be afraid of nothing but sin. (2.) Shaming himself, *that they might reproach me*. Note, Next to the sinfulness of sin, we should dread the scandalousness of it.

(3.) He humbly begs of God to reckon with them for their base designs upon him, ver. 14. *My God, think thou upon Tobiah*, and the rest of them, *according to their works*. As when he had mentioned his own good services, he did not covetously or ambitiously prescribe to God what reward he should give him, but modestly prayed, *think upon me, my God*, chap. v. 19. So here he doth not revengefully imprecate any particular judgment upon his enemies, but refers the matter to God; thou knowest their hearts, and art the avenger of falsehood and wrong, take cognizance of this cause, judge between me and them, and take what way and time thou pleasest to call them to an account for it. Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not avenge our selves, but commit our cause to him that judgeth righteously.

15. ¶ So the wall was finished, in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. 16. And it came to pass that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. 17. ¶ Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. 18. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam, the son of Berechiah. 19. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him: and Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

Nehemiah is here finishing the wall of Jerusalem, and yet still has trouble created him by his enemies.

1. Tobiah, and other the adversaries of the Jews, had the mortification to see the wall built up, notwithstanding all their attempts to hinder it. The wall was begun, and finished in fifty two days, and yet we have reason to believe they rested on the sabbaths, ver. 15. Many were employed, and there was room for them; what they did they did cheerfully, and minded their business, because they loved it. The threats of their enemies, which were intended to weaken them, it is likely, quickened them, to go on with their work the more vigorously, that they might get it done before the enemy came. Thus, out of the eater came forth



*forth meat.* See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we would set about it in earnest, and keep close to it.

When the enemies heard that the wall was finished before they thought it was well begun, and when they doubted not but to have put a stop to it, they were *much cast down in their own eyes*, ver. 16. (1.) They were ashamed of their own confidence, that they should *cause the work to cease*, they were crest-fallen upon the disappointment. (2.) They envied the prosperity and success of the Jews, grieved to see the walls of Jerusalem built, while it may be the kings of Persia had not permitted them thus to fortify the cities of Samaria. When Cain envied his brother, his *coun-tenance fell*, Gen. iv. 5. (3.) They despaired of ever doing them the mischief they designed them, of bringing them down, and making a prey of them, and well they might, for they perceived by the wonderful success, *that the work was wrought of God*. Even these heathens had so much sense, as (1.) To see a special providence of God conversant about the affairs of the church, when they did remarkably prosper. They *said among the heath-ens, the Lord has done great things for them*, it is his doing, Psal. cxxvi. 2. God fighteth for Israel, and worketh with them. (2.) To believe that God's work will be perfect, when they per-ceived that the *work was of God*, they expected no other but that it would go on and prosper. (3.) To conclude, that if it were of God it was to no purpose to think of opposing it, it would certainly prevail, and be victorious.

2. Nehemiah had the vexation notwithstanding this, to see some of his own people treacherously corresponding with Tobiah, and serving his interest, and a great grief and discouragement, no doubt, it was to him. (1.) Even of the nobles of Judah, there were those who had so little sense of honour and their country's good, as to communicate counsels with Tobiah by letter, ver. 17. they wrote with all the freedom and familiarity of friends to him, and welcomed his letters to them. Could nobles do a thing so mean? nobles of Judah so wicked a thing? It seems, great men are not always wise, not always honest. (2.) Many in Judah were in a strict but secret confederacy with him, to advance the interest of his country, tho' it would certainly be the ruin of their own. They were sworn unto him, not as their prince, but as their friend and ally, because both he and his son had married daughters of Israel, ver. 18. see the mischief of marrying with strangers, for one heathen that was converted by it, ten Jews were perverted. When once they became a-kin to Tobiah, they soon became sworn to him. A sinful love leads to a sinful league. (3.) They had the impudence to court Nehemiah himself into a friendship with him; they *reported his good deeds before me*; re-presented him as an ingenious gentleman, and well worthy my acquaintance, as an honest gentleman, and one that I might con-fide in. We are bid indeed to *speak ill of no man*, but never to speak well of ill men; *they that forsake the law praise the wicked*, Prov. xxviii. 4. (4.) They were so false as to betray Nehemiah's counsels to him; they uttered Nehemiah's words to him, per-verting them no doubt, and putting false constructions upon them, which furnished Tobiah with matter for letters to put him in fear, and so drive him from his work, and discourage him in it. Thus were all their thoughts against him for evil, yet God thought upon him for good.

## CHAP. VII.

*The success of one good design for God and our generation, should encourage us to proceed and form some other; Nehemiah did so, having fortified Jerusalem with gates and walls, his next care is, (1.) To see the city well kept, ver. 1—4. (2.) To see it well peopled, in order whereunto, he here reviews and calls over the register of the children of the captivity, the families that returned at first, and records it, ver. 5—73. It is the same in effect with that which we had, Ezra ii. What use he made of it we shall find afterwards, when he brought one of ten to live in Jerusalem, chap. xi. 1.*

1. **N**OW it came to pass when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters, and the fingers, and the Levites were appointed, 2. That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: (for he *was a faith-ful man, and feared God above many*) 3. And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened, until the sun be hot; and while they stand by let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one *to be over against his house*. 4. Now the city *was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded*.

God saith concerning his church, Isa. lxii. 6. *I have set watch-men upon thy walls, O Jerusalem*, that is Nehemiah's care here, for dead walls without living watchmen, are but a poor defence to a city.

No. xxxiii.

1. He appointed the porters, fingers, and Levites, in their places to their work; it is meant of their work in general, which was to attend the temple-service, that had been neglected in some degree, but now was revived. God's worship is the defence of a place, and his ministers, when they mind their duty, are watchmen on the walls: or, in particular, he ordered them to be ready against the wall was to be dedicated, that they might perform that service in an orderly and solemn manner; and the dedication of it was its strength. That is likely to be beneficial to us, which is devoted to God.

2. He appointed two governors, or consuls, to whom he com-mitted the care of the city, and gave them in charge to provide for the publick peace and safety. Hanani, his brother, who came to him with the tidings of the desolations of Jerusalem was one, a man of approved integrity and affection to his country; the other was Hananiah, that had been ruler of the palace, for he that has approved himself faithful in less, shall be intrusted with more. Of this Hananiah, it is said, that he was a *faithful man, and one that feared God above many*, ver. 2. Note, 1. Among those who fear God truly, there are some who fear him greatly, and excel others in the expressions and instances of that fear; and they are worthy a double portion of that honour which is due to them that *fear the Lord*, Psal. xv. 4. There were many in Jeru-salem that feared God, but this good man was more eminent for religion and serious godliness than any. (2.) Those that fear God must evidence it by their being faithful to all men, and uni-versally conscientious. 3. God's Jerusalem is then likely to flourish, when those rule in it, and have charge of it, who excel in virtue, and are eminent both for godliness and honesty. It is supposed by some, Nehemiah was now about to return to the Persian court, to have his commission renewed, and left these two worthy men in charge with the affairs of the city in his absence. Good go-vernors when and where they cannot act themselves, must be very careful whom they depute.

3. He gave orders about the shutting of the gates, and the guarding of the walls, ver. 3, 4. See here, (1.) What the pre-sent state of Jerusalem was. The city in compass was large and great, the walls inclosed the same ground as formerly, but much of it lay waste, for the houses were not built, but few in comparison with what had been; so that Nehemiah walled the city in faith, and with an eye to that promise of the replenishing of it, which God had lately made by the prophet, *Zech. viii. 3, &c.* Tho' the people were now few, he believed they would be multiplied, and therefore built the walls so as to make room for them; had he not depended upon this, he might have thought walls without a city as great a reproach, as a city without walls. (2.) What was the care of Nehemiah for it; he ordered the rulers of the cities themselves, (1.) To stand by and see the city gates shut up and barred every night; for in vain had they a wall, if they were careless of their gates. (2.) To take care that they should not be opened in the morning, till they could see the coasts clear. (3.) To set centinels upon the walls, or elsewhere, at convenient distances, who should, in case of the approach of the enemy, give timely notice to the city of the danger; and as it came to their turn to watch, they must post themselves *over against their own houses*, because of them, it might be presumed, they would be in a particular manner careful. The publick safety depends upon every one's particular care to guard himself and his own family against sin, that common enemy. It is every one's interest to watch, but many understand not their own interest, it is there-fore incumbent upon magistrates, to appoint watches. And as this people had lately found God with them in their building, else they had built in vain, so now the wall was built, no doubt they were made sensible, that *except the Lord kept the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*, Psal. cxxvii. 1, 2.

5. ¶ And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy: and I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein, 6. These *are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had car-ried away, and came again to Jerusalem, and to Judah, every one unto his city; 7. Who came with Zerub-babel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Neha-mani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nahum, Baanah; the number, I say, of the men of the people of Israel, was this; 8. The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. 9. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 10. The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two. 11. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua, and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred and eighteen. 12. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 13. The children of Zattu, eight hun-dred forty and five. 14. The children of Zaccai,*



seven hundred and threescore. 15. The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight. 16. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight. 17. The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two. 18. The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven. 19. The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven. 20. The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five. 21. The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 22. The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight. 23. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four. 24. The children of Hariph, an hundred and twelve. 25. The children of Gibeon, ninety and five. 26. The men of Beth-lehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight. 27. The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. 28. The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two. 29. The men of Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three. 30. The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 31. The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty and two. 32. The men of Beth-el and Ai, an hundred twenty and three. 33. The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two. 34. The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 35. The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 36. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 37. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one. 38. The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty. 39. ¶ The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 40. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 41. The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 42. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. 43. ¶ The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, and of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four. 44. ¶ The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight. 45. ¶ The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, an hundred thirty and eight. 46. ¶ The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth, 47. The children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon, 48. The children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmai, 49. The children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, 50. The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, 51. The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah, 52. The children of Befai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephishefim, 53. The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, 54. The children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 55. The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah, 56. The children of Nezia, the children of Hatipha. 57. ¶ The children of Solomons servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida, 58. The children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 59. The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon. 60. All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomons servants, were three hundred ninety and two. 61. And these were they which went up also from Tel-melah, Tel-haresha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not shew their fathers house, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel. 62. The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two. 63. ¶ And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name. 64. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 65. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. 66. ¶ The whole congregation together, was forty and two thou-

sand three hundred and threescore, 67. Beside their man-servants, and their maid-servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing-men, and singing-women. 68. Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred forty and five: 69. Their camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses. 70. ¶ And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work: the Tirshatha gave to the treasure, a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests garments. 71. And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work, twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver. 72. And that which the rest of the people gave, was twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests garments. 73. So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities, and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities.

We have here another good project of Nehemiah's, for wise and zealous men will be always contriving something or other for the glory of God, and the edification of his church. He knew very well, that the safety of a city, under God, depends more upon the number and valour of the inhabitants, than upon the height or strength of its walls; and therefore observing that the people were few that dwelt in it, he thought fit to take an account of the people, that he might find what families had formerly had their settlement in Jerusalem, but were now removed into the country, that he might bring them back; and what families could any other way be influenced by their religion, or by their business, to come and rebuild the houses in Jerusalem, and dwell in them. So little reason have we to wish that we may be placed alone in the earth, or in Jerusalem itself, that much of our safety and comfort depends upon our neighbours and friends; the more the stronger, the more the merrier. It is the wisdom of the governors of a nation to keep the balance even between city and country; that the metropolis be not so extravagantly large as to drain and impoverish the country, nor yet so weak as not to be able to protect it. Now observe,

1. Whence this good design of Nehemiah's came; he owns *ver. 5. my God put it into my heart.* Note, Whatever good motion is in our minds, either prudent or pious, we must acknowledge it to come from God. It was he that put it into our hearts; for every good gift, and every good work is from above, he gives knowledge, he gives grace; all is of him, and therefore all must be to him. What is done by human prudence, must be ascribed to the direction of divine providence; he that teaches the husbandman his discretion, *Isa. xxviii. 26.* teaches the statesman his.

2. What method he took in prosecution of it.

1. He called the rulers together, and the people, that he might have an account of the present state of their families, their number and strength, and where they were settled; which, it is likely, when he summoned them to come together, he ordered them to bring along with them out of their several districts. And I doubt they were not so many but it might be soon done.

2. He reviewed the old register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and compared the present accounts with that; and here we have the repetition of that, out of *Ezra ii.* The title is the same here, *ver. 6, 7.* as there, *ver. 1, 2.* These are the children of the province, &c. Two things are here repeated and recorded a second time from thence; (1.) The names and numbers of their several families; and (2.) Their oblations to the service of the temple. The repetition of these accounts, may intimate to us the delight which the great God is pleased to take in the persons, families, and services of his spiritual Israel, and the particular notice he takes of them. He knows them that are his, knows them all, knows them by name, has his eye on the register of those children of the captivity, and doth all according to the ancient counsel of his will concerning them.

1. Here is an account of the heads of the several families that first came up, *ver. 6—69.* As to this, (1.) Tho' it seem of little use to us now, yet then it was of great use to compare what they had been with what they now were. We may suppose they were much increased by this time, but it would do well for them to remember their small beginnings, that they might acknowledge God in multiplying their families, and building them up. By this means likewise, their genealogies would be preserved, and the distinction of their families kept up, till the Messiah should come, and then an end be put to all their genealogies, which were preserved for his sake, but afterwards were endless. But (2.) There are many differences in the numbers between this catalogue and that in *Ezra.* Most of them indeed are exactly the same, and some others within a very few under or over (one or two perhaps) and therefore I cannot



cannot think as some do, that that was the number of these families at their first coming, this as they were now, which was at least forty years after (some make it much more) for we cannot suppose so many families to be not at all, or but little, altered in their numbers in all that time, therefore what differences there are, we may suppose to arise either from the mistakes of transcribers, which easily happen in numbers, or from the diversity of the copies from which they were taken, or perhaps one was the account of them when they set out from Babylon with Zerubbabel, the other when they came to Jerusalem. The sum totals are all just the same there and here, except of the singing-men and singing-women, which there are two hundred, here two hundred forty-five. Those were not of such account, as that they should keep any strict account of them.

2. Here is an account of the offerings which were given towards the work of God, *ver. 70, &c.* This differs much from that, *Ezra ii. 68, 69.* and it may be questioned whether it refer to the same contribution; here the Tirshatha, or chief governor, begins the offering, who there was not mentioned. And the single sum mentioned there, exceeds all those here put together; yet it is probable it was the same, but that followed one copy of the subscriptions, this another; for the last verse is the same here that it was *Ezra ii. 70.* adding, *chap. iii. 1.* Blessed be God that our faith and hope are not built upon the niceties of names and numbers, genealogy and chronology, but on the great things of the law and gospel. Whatever is given to the work of God, he is not unrighteous to forget it; nor shall even a cup of cold water wherewith he is honoured go without its reward.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Ezra came up out of Babylon thirteen years before Nehemiah came, yet we have here a piece of good work which he did, that might have been done before but was not, till Nehemiah came, who tho' he was not such a scholar, nor such a divine, as Ezra, nor such a scribe in the law of his God, yet was a man of a more lively active spirit. His zeal set Ezra's learning on work, and then great things were done; as we find here, where we have (1.) The publick and solemn reading and expounding of the law, ver. 1—8. 2. The joy which the people were ordered to express upon that occasion, ver. 9—12. (3.) The solemn keeping of the feast of tabernacles according to the law, ver. 13—18.*

1. **A**ND all the people gathered themselves together as one man, into the street that was before the water-gate, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. 2. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3. And he read therein before the street that was before the water-gate, from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. 4. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose, and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, (for he was above all the people) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: 6. And Ezra blessed the LORD the great God: and all the people answered, Amen, amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 7. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. 8. So they read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

We have here an account of a solemn religious assembly, and the good work that was done in that assembly, to the honour of God, and the edification of the church.

1. The time of it was the first day of the seventh month, *ver. 2.* That was the day of the feast of trumpets, which is called a sabbath, and on which they were to have a holy convocation, *Lev. xxiii. 24.* Numb. xxix. 1. But that was not all, it was on that

day that the altar was set up, and they began to offer their burnt-offerings after their return out of captivity, a late mercy in the memory of many now living; and in a thankful remembrance of that, it is likely, they had kept this feast ever since, with more than ordinary solemnity. Divine favours that are fresh in mind, and which we ourselves have been witnesses of, should be, and usually are, most affecting.

2. The place was in the street that was before the water-gate, *ver. 1.* a spacious broad street, able to contain so great a multitude, which the court of the temple was not, for probably it was not now built near so large as it had been in Solomon's time. Sacrifices were to be offered only at the door of the temple, but praying, and praising, and preaching, were and are services of religion as acceptably performed in one place as in another. When this congregation was thus met in the street of the city, no doubt, God was with them.

3. The persons that met were all the people, who were not compelled to come, but voluntarily gathered themselves together by common agreement, as one man: not only men came, but women and children, even as many as were capable of understanding what they heard. Masters of families should bring their families with them to the publick worship of God. Women and children have souls to save, and are therefore concerned to acquaint themselves with the word of God, and attend on the means of knowledge and grace. Little ones, as they come to the exercise of reason, must be trained up in the exercises of religion.

4. The master of this assembly was Ezra the priest, he presided in this service. None so fit as he to expound and preach, who was such a ready scribe in the law of his God. (1.) His call to the service was very clear, for being in office as a priest, and qualified as a scribe, the people spake to him to bring the book of the law, and read it to them, *ver. 1.* God gave him ability and authority, and then the people gave him opportunity and invitation. Knowledge is spiritual alms, which they that are able should give to every one that needeth, to every one that asketh. (2.) His post was very convenient, he stood in a pulpit or tower of wood, which they had made for the word; so it is in the original, for the preaching of the word, that what he said might be the more gracefully delivered, and the better heard, and that the eyes of the hearers might be upon him, which would engage their attention; as *Luke iv. 20.* (3.) He had several assistants, some that stood with him, *ver. 4.* six on his right hand, and seven on his left; either his pulpit was so contrived as to hold them all on a row, as in a gallery (but then it would scarce have been called a tower) or they had desks a degree lower. Some think he appointed them to read when he was weary, at least his taking them as assessors with him, put an honour upon them before the people, in order to their being employed in the same service another time. Others who are mentioned, *ver. 7.* seem to have been employed at the same time, in other places near at hand, to read and expound to those who could not come within hearing of Ezra. Of those also there were thirteen priests, whose lips were to keep knowledge, *Mal. ii. 7.* It is a great mercy to a people thus to be furnished with ministers that are apt to teach; happy was Ezra in having such assistants as these, and happy those in having such a guide as Ezra.

5. The religious exercises performed in this assembly were not ceremonial, but moral, praying and preaching: Ezra, as president of the assembly, was (1.) The people's mouth to God, and they affectionately joined with him, *ver. 6.* He blessed the Lord as the great God, gave honour to him by praising his perfections; and praying for his favour; and the people, in token of their concurrence with him, both in prayers and praises, said amen, amen, lifted up their hands in token of their desire being towards God, and all their expectation from him; and bowed their heads in token of their reverence of him, and subjection to him. Thus must we adore God, and address our selves to him, when we are going to read and hear the word of God, as those that see God in his word, very great and very good. (2.) God's mouth to the people, and they attentively hearkened to him. This was the chief business of the solemnity, and observe,

1. Ezra brought the law before the congregation, *ver. 2.* He had taken care to provide himself with the best and most correct copies of the law, and what he had laid up for his own use and satisfaction he here brought forth, as a good householder out of his treasury, for the benefit of the church. Observe, 1. The book of the law is not to be confined to the scribes studies, but to be brought before the congregation, and read to them in their own language. 2. Ministers when they go to the pulpit, should take their Bibles with them; Ezra did so; thence they must fetch their knowledge, and according to that rule, they must speak, and must shew that they do so. See 2 *Chron. xvii. 9.*

2. He opened the book with great reverence and solemnity, in the sight of all the people, *ver. 5.* He brought it forth with a sense of the great mercy of God to them in giving them that book; he opened it with a sense of his mercy to them in giving them leave to read it, that it was not a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed. The taking of the book, and the opening of the seals, we find celebrated with joy and praise, *Rev. v. 9.* Let us learn to address our selves to the services of religion with solemn steps and pauses, and not to go about them rashly; let us consider what



we are doing, when we take God's book into our hands, and open it; and so also when we bow our knees in prayer, and what we do, let us do it deliberately, *Eccl. v. 1.*

3. He and others read in the book of the law, *from morning till noon*, ver. 3. and they read distinctly, *ver. 8.* Reading the scriptures in religious assemblies, is an ordinance of God, whereby he is honoured, and his church edified. And upon special occasions, we must be willing to attend for many hours together, on the reading and expounding of the word of God: they here were thus employed six hours. Let those that read and preach the word, learn also to deliver themselves distinctly; as those who understand what they say and are affected with it themselves, and who desire that those they speak to may understand it, retain it, and be affected with it likewise. *It is a snare for a man to devour that which is holy.*

4. What they read they expounded, shewed the intent and meaning of it, and what use was to be made of it, they gave the sense in other words, that they might *cause the people to understand the reading*, ver. 7, 8. Note, 1. It is requisite that those who hear the word should understand it, else it is to them but an empty sound of words, *Mat. xxiv. 15.* 2. It is therefore required of those who are teachers by office, that they explain the word, and give the sense of it. *Understandest thou what thou readeest?* and *have ye understood all these things?* are good questions to be put to the hearers; but *how should we, except some one guide us?* is as proper a question for them to put to their teachers, *Acts viii. 30, 31.* Reading is good, and preaching good, but expounding brings the reading and the preaching together, which makes the reading the more intelligible, and the preaching the more convincing.

5. The people carried themselves very decently and well, when the word was read and opened to them.

1. With great reverence. When Ezra opened the book, *all the people stood up*, ver. 5. thereby shewing respect both to Ezra, and to the word he was about to read. It becomes servants to stand when their master speaks to them; in honour to their master, and to shew a readiness to do as they are bidden.

2. With great fixedness and composedness, they *stood in their place*, ver. 7. several ministers were reading and expounding at some distance from each other, and each of the people kept their post, did not go to hear first one and then another, to make remarks upon them, but stood in their place, that they might neither give disturbance to others, nor receive any distraction themselves.

3. With great attention and a close application of mind; *the ears of all the people were unto the book of the law*, ver. 3. were even chained to it, they heard readily, and minded every word. The word of God commands attention and deserves it. If through carelessness we let much slip in hearing, there is danger that through forgetfulness we shall let all slip after hearing.

9. ¶ And Nehemiah which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God, mourn not nor weep: for all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. 10. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.* 11. So the Levites stilled all the people saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy, neither be ye grieved. 12. And all the people went their way to eat and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

We may observe here,

1. How the people were wounded with the words of the law that were read to them. The law worketh death, and speaks terror, shews men their sins and their misery and danger because of sin, and thunders a curse against every one that continues not every part of his duty. Therefore when they heard it, they *all wept*, ver. 9. it was a good sign their hearts were tender, like Josiah's, when he heard the words of the law. They wept to think how they had offended God, and exposed themselves by their many violations of this law; when some wept, all wept, for they all saw themselves guilty before God.

2. How they were healed and comforted with the words of peace that were spoken to them. It was well that they were so much affected with the word of God, and received the impressions of it; but they must not exceed in their mourning; especially not at this time, because the day was holy to the Lord, it was one of the solemn feasts, on which it was their duty to rejoice. And even sorrow for sin must not hinder our joy in God, but rather lead to it, and prepare us for it.

(1.) The masters of the assembly endeavoured to pacify them, and encourage them. Now Nehemiah is brought in, and not

before, in this chapter; he took notice of the peoples weeping; Ezra was pleased to see them so affected with the word, but Nehemiah observed to him, and Ezra concurred in the thought, that it was now unseasonable; this day was holy, it is called a sabbath, *Lev. xxiii. 24.* and therefore was to be celebrated with joy and praise, not as if it were *a day to afflict the souls.* (1.) They forbid the people to *mourn and weep*, ver. 9. *be not sorry*, ver. 10. *Hold your peace neither be ye grieved*, ver. 11. Every thing is beautiful in its season; as we must not be merry, when *God calls to mourning*, so we must not frighten and afflict our selves when God given us occasion to rejoice. Even sorrow for sin must not grow so excessive, as to hinder our joy in God, and our cheerfulness in his service. (2.) They commanded them to testify their joy, to *put on the garments of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness.* They allow them in token of their joy to feast themselves, to eat and drink better than on other days, *eat the fat, and drink the sweet*: but then it must be (1.) With charity to the poor, *send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared*, that your abundance may supply their want; that they may rejoice with you, and their joys may bless you. Christ directs those that make feasts, to invite their poor neighbours, *Luke xiv. 12.* But it is especially the duty of a religious feast, as well as of a religious fast, to *draw out the soul to the hungry*, *Isa. lviii. 7, 10.* God's bounty should make us bountiful. Many will eat the fat, and drink the sweet themselves, even to excess, that will never allow portions, nor scarce crumbs, to the poor, who may read their own doom in the parable of the rich man, *Luk. xvi. 19, &c.* But such know not, or consider not, what God gave them their estates for. Observe, We must not only give to those that offer themselves, but send to those that are out of sight. *The liberal deviseth liberal things*, and seeks objects of charity. (2.) It must be with piety and devotion; *the joy of the Lord is your strength.* Let it not be a carnal sensual joy, but holy and spiritual, the *joy of the Lord*, joy in the goodness of God, under the conduct and government of the grace of God; joy arising from our interest in the love and favour of God, and the tokens of his favour. This joy will be your strength, therefore encourage it; it will be your strength, (1.) For the performance of the other duties of the feast; the more cheerful we are in our religious exercises, the more we shall abound in them. (2.) For all that which you have to do in conformity to the law of God which has been read to you. Holy joy will be oil to the wheels of our obedience. (3.) For the resisting of your enemies that are plotting against you. The joy of the Lord will arm us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies, and put our mouths out of taste to those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks.

(2.) The assembly complied with the directions that were given them. Their weeping was *stilled*, ver. 11. and they *made great mirth*, ver. 12. Note, We ought always to have such a command of every passion, as that however it may break out, it may soon be restrained and called in again, when we are convinced that it is either unreasonable or unseasonable. *He that has such a rule as this over his own spirit is better than the mighty.* Observe (1.) After they had wept they rejoiced; holy mourning make way for holy mirth. They that *sow in tears shall reap in joy.* They that tremble at the convictions of the word, may triumph in the consolations of it. (2.) The ground of their joy was very good; they made mirth, not because they had the fat to eat, and the sweet to drink, and a deal of good company, but because they had *understood the words that were declared to them.* Note, 1. To have the holy scriptures with us, and helps to understand them, is a very great mercy, which we have abundant reason to rejoice in. Bibles and ministers are the joy of God's Israel. 2. The better we understand the word of God, the more comfort we shall find in it: for the darkness of trouble ariseth from the darkness of ignorance and mistake. When the words were first declared to them, they wept, but when they understood them, they rejoiced, finding at length precious promises made to those who repented and reformed, and that therefore there was hope in Israel.

13. ¶ And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. 14. And they found written in the law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths, in the feast of the seventh month: 15. And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive-branches, and pine-branches, and myrtle-branches, and palm-branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. 16. ¶ So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water-gate, and in the street



of the gate of Ephraim. 17. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity, made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so: and there was very great gladness. 18. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God: and they kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

We have here,

1. The peoples renewed attendance upon the word. They had spent the greatest part of one day in praying and hearing, and yet were so far from being weary of that new moon and sabbath, that the next day after, tho' it was no festival, the chief of them came together again to hear Ezra expound, *ver. 13.* which they found more delightful and gainful, than any worldly pleasure or profit whatsoever. Note, The more we converse with the word of God, if we rightly understand it, and be affected with it, the more we shall covet to converse with it; and to increase in our acquaintance with it, saying, *how sweet are thy words unto my mouth!* They that understand the scriptures well, will still be desirous to understand them better. Now the priests and the Levites themselves came with the chief of the people to Ezra, that prince of expositors, to understand the words of the law, or, as it is in the margin, *that they might instruct in the words of the law*, they came to be taught themselves, that they might be qualified to teach others. Observe, 1. That tho' on the first day, Ezra's humility had set them on his right hand, and on his left, as teachers with him, *ver. 4, 7.* yet now they being by trial made more sensible than ever of their own deficiencies, and his excellencies, on the second day their humility set them at Ezra's feet, as learners of him. 2. Those that would teach others, must themselves receive instruction. Priests and Levites must be taught first, and then teach.

2. The peoples ready obedience to the word, in one particular instance, as soon as they were made sensible of their duty therein. It is likely, Ezra, *after the wisdom of his God that was in his hand* (Ezra vii. 25) when they applied themselves to him for instruction out of the law on the second day of the seventh month, read to them those laws which concerned the feast of that month, and among the rest, that of the feast of tabernacles, *Lev. xxiii. 34. Deut. xvi. 13.* Ministers should preach not only that which is true and good, but that which is seasonable, directing to the *work of the day in its day.*

Here is, 1. The divine appointment of the feast of tabernacles reviewed, *ver. 14, 15.* They found written in the law a commandment concerning it. They that diligently search the scriptures, will find those things written there, which they had forgotten, or not duly considered. This feast of tabernacles, was a memorial of their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, a representation of our tabernacle-state in this world, and a type of the holy joy of the gospel church; the conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ, is foretold under the figure of this feast, *Zech. xiv. 16.* they shall come to keep the feast of tabernacles, as having here no continuing city. This feast was to be proclaimed in all their cities. The people were themselves to fetch boughs of trees, (they of Jerusalem fetched them from the mount of Olives) and to make booths or arbours of them, in which they were to lodge (as much as the weather would permit) and to make merry during the feast.

2. This appointment religiously observed, *ver. 16, 17.* Then we read and hear the word acceptably and profitably, when we do according to what is written therein: when what appears to be our duty, after it has been neglected is revived.

1. They observed the ceremony: they sat in booths, which the priests and Levites set up in the courts of the temple, those that had houses of their own, on the roofs of them, or in their courts; and those that had not such conveniences set them up in the streets. This feast had usually been observed, *2 Chron. v. 3. Ezra iii. 4.* but never with such solemnity as now since Joshua's time, when they were newly settled, as they were now newly re-settled in Canaan. That man loves his house too well, that cannot find in his heart to quit it a while in compliance either with an ordinance or with a providence of God.

2. They minded the substance; else the ceremony how significant soever had been insignificant. (1.) They did it with gladness; with very great gladness, rejoicing in God, and his goodness to them. All their holy feasts, but this especially, were to be celebrated with joy, which would be much for the honour of God, and their own encouragement in his service. (2.) They attended the reading and expounding of the word of God, during all the days of the feast. *ver. 18.* They improved their leisure for this good work: spare hours cannot be better spent than in studying the scriptures and conversing with them. At this feast of tabernacles, God appointed the law to be read, once in seven years; whether this was that year of release in which that service was to be performed, (*Deut. xxxi. 10, 11.*) doth not appear, however they spent all the days of the feast, in that good

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work, and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly as God had appointed; in which they finished the solemnity the twenty-second day of the month, yet did not scatter; for the twenty-fourth day was appointed to be spent in fasting and prayer. Holy joy must not indispose us for godly sorrow, no more than godly sorrow for holy joy.

## CHAP. IX.

*The tenth day of the seventh month between the feast of trumpets, chap. viii. 2. and the feast of tabernacles, ver. 14. was appointed to be the day of atonement; we have no reason to think but that it was religiously observed, tho' it is not mentioned: But here we have an account of an occasional fast that was kept a fortnight after that, with reference to the present posture of their affairs, and it was as that, a day of humiliation. There is a time to weep as well as a time to laugh. We have here an account (1.) How this fast was observed, ver. 1—3. (2.) What were the heads of the prayer that was made to God on that occasion, wherein they made a thankful acknowledgment of God's mercies, a penitent confession of sin, and a humble submission to the righteous hand of God in the judgments that were brought upon them, concluding with a solemn resolution of new obedience, ver. 4—38.*

1. **N**OW in the twenty and fourth day of this month, the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes and earth upon them. 2. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. 3. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God, one fourth part of the day, and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

We have here a general account of a publick fast which the children of Israel kept, probably by order from Nehemiah, by and with the advice and consent of the chief of the fathers. It was a fast that men appointed, but such a fast as God had chosen; for

1. It was a day to afflict the soul, *Isa. lviii. 5.* It is likely they assembled in the courts of the temple, and they there appeared in sackcloth, and in the posture of mourners with earth on their heads, *ver. 1.* By those outward expressions of sorrow and humiliation they gave glory to God, took shame to themselves, and stirred up one another to repentance. They were restrained from weeping, *chap. viii. 9.* but now they were directed to weep. The joy of our holy feasts must give way to the sorrow of our solemn fasts when they come. Every thing is beautiful in its season.

2. It was a day to loose the bands of wickedness, and that is the fast that God has chosen, *Isa. lviii. 6.* Without this, spreading sackcloth and ashes under us, is but a jest. The seed of Israel, because they were a holy seed appropriated to God, and more excellent than their neighbours, separated themselves from all strangers, with whom they had mingled themselves and joined in affinity, *ver. 2.* Ezra had separated them from their strange wives some years before, but they had relapsed into the same sin, and had either made marriages, or at least made friendships with them, and contracted such an intimacy as was a snare to them. But now they separated themselves from the strange children, as well as from the strange wives. They that intend by prayers and covenants to join themselves to God, must separate themselves from sin and sinners, for *what communion hath light with darkness?*

3. It was a day of communion with God; They fasted to him, even to him, *Zech. vii. 5.* for (1.) They spake to him, in prayer, offered their pious and devout affections to him, in the confession of sin, and the adoration of him as the Lord and their God. Fasting without prayer, is a body without a soul, a worthless carcase. (2.) They heard him speaking to them by his word, for they read in the book of the law, which is very proper on fasting days, that, in the glass of the law, we may see our deformities and defilements, and know what to acknowledge and what to amend. The word will direct and quicken prayer, for by it the Spirit helps our praying infirmities. Observe how the time was equally divided between these two. Three hours (for that is the fourth part of a day) they spent in reading, expounding, and applying the scriptures; and three hours in confessing sin and praying; so that they staid together six hours, and spent all the time in the solemn acts of religion, without saying, *behold what a weariness is it!* The varying of the exercises made it the less tedious, and as the word they read would furnish them with matter for prayer, so prayer would make the word the more profitable. Bishop Patrick thinks they spent the whole twelve hours of the day in devotion, that from six a-clock in the morning till nine they read, and then from nine to twelve they prayed; from twelve to three they read again, and from three till six at night they prayed again. The work of a fast day



day is good work, and therefore we should endeavour to make a day's work, a good day's work of it.

4. ¶ Then stood up upon the stairs of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Cadmiel, Shedabiah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God. 5. Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethabiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. 6. Thou, *even* thou art LORD alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. 7. Thou *art* the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham. 8. And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him, to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give *it*, *I say*, to his seed, and hast performed thy words, for thou *art* righteous: 9. And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red-sea: 10. And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them: so didst thou get thee a name, as *it is* this day. 11. And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. 12. Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. 13. Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes, and commandments: 14. And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: 15. And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land, which thou hadst sworn to give them. 16. But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, 17. And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them: but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. 18. Yea when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This *is* thy god that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations: 19. Yet thou in thy manifold mercies, forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. 20. Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. 21. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, *so that* they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. 22. Moreover, thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. 23. Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess *it*. 24. So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. 25. And they took strong cities, and

a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and olive-yards, and fruit-trees in abundance, so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. 26. Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them, to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. 27. Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. 28. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore ledest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned and cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven, and many times didst thou deliver them, according to thy mercies: 29. And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments (which if a man do, he shall live in them) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. 30. Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. 31. Nevertheless, for thy great mercies sake, thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou *art* a gracious and merciful God. 32. Now therefore our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy; let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria, unto this day. 33. Howbeit, thou *art* just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: 34. Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments, and thy testimonies wherewith thou didst testify against them. 35. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. 36. Behold, we *are* servants this day, and *for* the land that thou gavest unto our fathers, to eat the fruit thereof, and the good thereof, behold, we *are* servants in it. 37. And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we *are* in great distress. 38. And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write *it*; and our princes, Levites, and priests seal unto *it*.

We have here an account how the work of this fast-day was carried on.

1. The names of the ministers that were employed. They are twice named, *ver.* 4, 5. only with some variation of the names. Either they prayed successively, according to that rule which the apostle gives, *1 Cor. iv. 31. ye may all prophesy one by one.* Or, as some think, there were eight several congregations at some distance from each other, and each had a Levite to preside in it.

2. The work it self they employed themselves in; (1.) They prayed to God; cried to him with a loud voice, *ver.* 4. for the pardon of the sins of Israel, and God's favour to them. They cried aloud not that God might the better hear them, as Baal's worshippers, but that the people might, and to excite their fervency. (2.) They praised God. For the work of praise is not unseasonable on a fast-day; in all acts of devotion we must aim at this, *to give unto God the glory due to his name.*

The summary of their prayers we have here upon record; whether drawn up before, as a directory to the Levites what to enlarge on, or recollected after, as the heads of what they had in prayer enlarged upon, is uncertain. Much more no doubt was said than is here recorded, else confessing and worshipping God had not taken up a fourth part of the day, much less two fourths.

In this solemn address to God, we have,

1. An awful adoration of God, as a perfect and glorious being, and the fountain of all being, *ver.* 5, 6. The congregation is called



called upon, to signify their concurrence herewith, by standing up; and so the minister directs himself to God, *blessed be thy glorious name*. God is here adored, (1.) As the one only living and true God. *Thou art Jehovah alone*, self-existent and independent, there is no God besides thee. (2.) As the Creator of all things: *thou hast made heaven, earth, and seas*, and all that is in them. The first article of our creed is fitly made the first article of our praises. (3.) As the great protector of the whole creation; thou preservest in being all the creatures thou hast given being to. God's providence extends it self to the highest beings for they need it, and to the meanest for they are not slighted by it. What God has made he will preserve; what he doth is done firm, *Eccl. iii. 14.* (4.) As the object of the creatures praises, *the host of heaven*, the world of holy angels *worshippeth thee*, ver. 6. But thy name is exalted above all blessings and praise, it needs not the praises of the creatures, nor is any addition made to its glory by those praises. The best performances in the praising of God's name, even those of the angels themselves, fall infinitely short of what it deserves. It is not only exalted above our blessing, but above all blessing. Put all the praises of heaven and earth together; and the thousandth part is not said of what might and should be said of the glory of God. *Our goodness extendeth not to him.*

2. A thankful acknowledgment of God's favours to Israel, many of which are here reckoned up in order before him, and very much to the purpose, for (1.) We must take all occasions to mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and in every prayer give thanks. (2.) When we are confessing our sins, it is good to take notice of the mercies of God, as the aggravations of our sins, that we may be the more humbled and ashamed, and call our selves by the scandalous name of *ungrateful*. (3.) When we are seeking to God for mercy and relief in the time of distress, it is an encouragement to our faith and hope, to look back upon our own and our fathers experiences, Lord, thou hast done well for us formerly, shall it be all undone again? Art not thou the same God still?

Let us briefly observe the particular instances of God's goodness to Israel here recounted.

1. The call of Abraham, ver. 7. God's favour to him was distinguishing, thou didst choose him; his grace in him was powerful to bring him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and in giving him the name of Abraham, he put honour upon him as his own, and assured him that he should be the *father of many nations*. Look unto Abraham your father, Isa. li. 2. and see free grace glorified in him.

2. The covenant God made with him, to give the land of Canaan to him and his seed, a type of the better country, ver. 8. And this covenant was sure, for God found Abraham's heart faithful before God, and therefore found it so, because he made it so (for faith is not of our selves, it is the gift of God) and therefore performed his words; for *with the upright he will shew himself upright*, and wherever he finds a faithful heart, he will be found a faithful God.

3. The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, ver. 9, 10, 11. It was seasonable to remember this, now they were interceding for the perfecting of their deliverance out of Babylon. They were then delivered in compassion to their affliction, in answer to their cry, and in resistance of the pride and insolence of their persecutors: wherein they dealt proudly God shewed himself *above them*, *Exod. xviii. 11.* and so *gave him a name*; for he said, *I will get me honour upon Pharaoh*; even to this day, the name of God is glorified for that wonderful work. It was done miraculously; signs and wonders were shewed for the effecting of it: their deliverance was the destruction of their enemies: they were *thrown into the deeps* as irrecoverably as a stone into the mighty waters.

4. The conducting of them through the wilderness: by the pillar of cloud and fire, which shewed them both which way they should go, when they should remove, and when and where they should rest, directed all their stages, and all their steps, ver. 12. And was also a visible token of God's presence with them, to guide and guard them. They mention this again, ver. 19. observing, that tho' they had by their sins provoked God to withdraw from them and leave them to wander and perish in the by-paths of the wilderness, yet in his manifold mercy he continued to lead them, and took not away the *pillar of cloud and fire*, ver. 19. When mercies tho' forfeited are continued, we are much obliged to be doubly thankful.

5. The plentiful provision made for them in the wilderness, that they might not perish for hunger, thou *gavest them bread from heaven*, and *water out of the rock*, (ver. 15.) and to hold up their hearts, a promise that they should go in and possess the land of Canaan. Meat and drink, food convenient in the way, and the good land in their journey's end, what would they more? This also is repeated, ver. 20, 21. as that which was continued, notwithstanding their provocations; *forty years didst thou sustain them*, never was people so long nursed, and so tenderly; it was wonderfully provided, that in so long a time *their clothes waxed not old*, and tho' the way was rough and tedious, *their feet swelled not*, for they were *carried as upon eagles wings*.

6. The giving of the law upon mount Sinai. This was the greatest favour of all that was done them, and the greatest honour

that was put upon them. The lawgiver was very glorious, ver. 13. Thou didst not send only, but camest down thy self, and *spakest with them*, Deut. iv. 33. The law given was very good; no nation under the sun had such *right judgments, true laws*, and *good statutes*, Deut. iv. 8. The moral and judicial precepts true and right; founded upon natural equity, and the eternal reasons of good and evil: and even the ceremonial institutions good, tokens of God's goodness to them, and types of gospel grace. Particular notice is taken of the law of the fourth commandment as a great favour to them; *thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbath*, which was a token of God's particular favour to them; distinguishing them from the nations who had revolted from God; and quite lost that ancient instance of revealed religion: and was likewise a means of keeping up their communion with him. And with the law, and the sabbath, he *gave his good Spirit to instruct them*, ver. 20. Besides the law given on mount Sinai, the five books of Moses, which he wrote *as he was moved by the holy Ghost*, were constant instructions to them, particularly the book of Deuteronomy, in which God's Spirit by Moses instructed them fully. Bezaleel was filled *with the Spirit of God*, *Exod. xxxi. 3.* So was Joshua, *Numb. xxvii. 18.* and Caleb had another Spirit.

7. The putting of them in possession of Canaan, that good land, *kingdoms and nations*, ver. 22. They were made so numerous as to replenish it, ver. 23. and so victorious as to be masters of it, ver. 24. the natives were given into their hands, *that they might do with them as they would*, set their feet if they pleased on the necks of their kings. Thus they gained a happy settlement, ver. 25. Look upon their cities, and you see them strong and well fortified. Look into their houses, and you find them fine and well furnished, filled with all sorts of rich goods. Take a view of the country, and you will say you never saw such a fat land so well stored with *vineyards and oliveyards*. All these they found made ready to their hands, so they delighted themselves in the gifts of God's great goodness. They could not wish to be more easy or happy than they were, or might have been in Canaan, had it not been their own fault.

8. God's great readiness to pardon their sins, and work deliverance for them, when they had by their provocations brought his judgments upon themselves. When they were in the wilderness, they found him *a God ready to pardon*, ver. 17. a *God of pardons*; so the margin reads it, who had proclaimed his name by this, *forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin*: who has power to forgive sin, is willing to forgive, and glories in it: tho' they forsook him, he did not forsake them, as justly he might have done, but continued his care of them, and favour to them. Afterwards when they were settled in Canaan, and sold themselves by their sins into the hand of their enemies, upon their submission and humble request he *gave them saviours*, ver. 27. the judges, by whom God wrought many a great deliverance for them when they were on the brink of ruin. This he did not for any merit of theirs, for they deserved nothing but ill, but according to his mercies, his manifold mercies.

9. The admonitions and fair warnings he gave them by his servants the prophets. When he delivered them from their troubles, he *testified against their sins*, ver. 28, 29. that they might not misconstrue their deliverances as connivances at their wickedness. That which was designed in all the testimonies which the prophets bore against them, was to bring them again to God's law, to lay their necks under its yoke, and walk by its rule. The end of our ministry is to bring people to God, by bringing them to his law, not to bring them to our selves, by bringing them under any law of ours. This we have again, ver. 30. *Thou testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets*. The testimony of the prophets was the testimony of the Spirit in the prophets, and it was the Spirit of Christ in them, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. They *spoke as they were moved by the holy Ghost*, and what they said is to be received accordingly. God gave them *his Spirit to instruct them*, ver. 20. but they not receiving that instruction, he did by his Spirit testify against them; if we will not suffer God's word to teach and rule us, it will accuse and judge us. God sends prophets in compassion to his people, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15.) that he may not send judgments.

10. The lengthning out of his patience, and the moderating of his rebukes. *Many years did he forbear them*, ver. 30. as loth to punish them, and waiting to see if they would repent, and when he did punish them, he did not *utterly consume them, nor forsake them*, ver. 31. Had he forsaken them, they had been utterly consumed, but he did not stir up all his wrath, for he designed their reformation; not their destruction.

Thus do they multiply, thus do they magnify, the instances of God's goodness to Israel, and we should do in like manner, that the goodness of God, duly considered by us, may lead us to repentance, and overcome our badness; the more thankful we are for God's mercies, the more humbled we shall be for our own sins.

3. Here is a penitent confession of sin, their own sins, and the sins of their fathers. The mention of these is interwoven with the memorials of God's favours, that God's goodness, notwithstanding their provocations, might appear the more illustrious, and their sins, notwithstanding his favours, might appear the more heinous. Many passages in this acknowledgment of sins and mer-



cies are taken from *Ezek. xx. 5—26.* as will appear by comparing those verses with these; for the word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, and by what he saith to us, we may learn what to say to him.

(1.) They begin with the sins of Israel in the wilderness; *they, even our fathers*, (so it might better be read) *dealt proudly*, tho' considering what they were, and how lately they were come out of slavery, they had no reason to be proud, *and hardened their necks*, ver. 16. Pride is at the bottom of mens obstinacy and disobedience; they think it below them to bow their necks to God's yoke, and a piece of state to set up their own will in opposition to the will of God himself. There were two things which they did not duly give heed to, else they had not done as they did. The word of God they heard, but they did not hearken to God's commandments. And the works of God, neither were they mindful of his wonders; had they duly considered them as miracles, they would have obeyed from a principle of faith and holy fear; had they duly considered them as mercies, they would have obeyed from a principle of gratitude and holy love. But when men make no right use either of God's ordinances, or of his providences, what can be expected from them? Two great sins are here instanced in which they were guilty of in the wilderness; meditating a return, (1.) To Egyptian slavery, which for the sake of the garlick and onions, they preferred before the glorious liberty of the Israel of God, attended with some difficulty and inconvenience. *In their rebellion they appointed a captain to return to their bondage*, in distrust of God's power, and contempt of his good promise, ver. 17. (2.) To Egyptian idolatry; *they made a molten calf*, and were so sottish as to say, *this is thy God*.

(2.) They next bewail the provocations of their fathers after they were put in possession of Canaan. Tho' there they *delighted themselves in God's great goodness*, yet that would not prevail to keep them tight to him, for *nevertheless they were disobedient*, ver. 26. *and wrought great provocations*. For, (1.) They abused God's prophets, *slew them*, because they *testified against them*, to turn them to God, ver. 26. So returning the greatest injury for the greatest kindness. (2.) They abused his favours, *after they had rest, they did evil again*, ver. 28. not wrought upon, either by their troubles, or their deliverances out of trouble. Neither fear nor love would hold them to their duty.

(3.) They at length come nearer to their own day, and lament the sins which had brought those judgments upon them, which they had long been groaning under, and were now but in part delivered from. *We have done wickedly*, ver. 33. *Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers*, have all been guilty, and we in them, ver. 34. Two things they charge upon themselves and their fathers, as the cause of their troubles, 1. A contempt of the good law God had given them. They *sinned against thy judgments*, the dictates of divine wisdom, and the demands of divine sovereignty: tho' they were told how much it would be for their own advantage to govern themselves by them, for *if a man do them, he shall live in them*, ver. 29. yet they would not do them, and so in effect said, they *would not live*; they *forsook their own mercies*. This abridgment of the covenant, *do this and live*, is taken from *Ezek. xx. 13.* and is quoted, *Gal. iii. 12.* to prove that *the law is not of faith*; it was not then as it is now, *believe and live*, yet they gave a withdrawing shoulder, so it is in the margin. They pretended to lay their shoulders under the burthen of God's law, and put their shoulders to the work, but they proved withdrawing shoulders, they soon flew off, would not stick to it, would not abide by it; when it came, (as we say) to the setting to, they shrunk back, and would not hear; they had a backsliding heart. And tho' God by his prophets called them to return, they *would not give ear*, ver. 30. he *stretched out his hands, but no man regarded*. 2. A contempt of the good land God had given them, ver. 35. *Our kings have not served thee in their kingdom*, not used their power for the support of religion; our people have not served thee in the use of the gifts of thy great goodness, and in that large and fat land, which thou not only gavest them by thy grant, but gavest before them by the expulsion of the natives, and the compleat victories they obtained over them. They that would not serve God in their own land, were made to serve their enemies in a strange land, as was threatened, *Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.* It is a pity a good land should have bad inhabitants, but so it was with Sodom; fatness and fulness oft make men proud and sensual.

4. Here is a humble representation of the judgments of God, which they had been, and were now under.

(1.) Former judgments are remembered as aggravations of their sins, that they had not taken warning. In the days of the judges their *enemies vexed them*, ver. 27. And when they did evil again, God did again *leave them in the hand of their enemies*, who could not have touched them, if God had not given them up, but when God left them, they got and kept dominion over them.

(2.) Their present calamitous state is laid before the Lord, ver. 36, 37. *We are servants this day*. Free-born Israelites are enslaved, and the land which they had long held by a much more honourable tenure than grand serjeanty it self, even by immediate grant from the crown of heaven, to them as a peculiar people above all people of the earth, they now held by as base a tenure as villainage it self, by, from, and under the kings of Persia, whose

vassals they were. A sad change! but see what work sin makes! They were bound to personal service; they have *dominion over our bodies*; they held all they had precariously, were tenants at will, and their land-tax that they paid was so great, that it amounted even to a rack-rent; so that all the rents, issues, and profits of their land, did in effect accrue to the king, and it was as much as they could do, to get a bare subsistence for themselves and their families out of it; this they honestly own was for their sins; poverty and slavery are the fruits of sin; that brings us into all our distresses.

5. Here is their address to God upon these calamities.

1. By way of request, that their trouble might not seem little, ver. 32. It is the only petition in all this prayer. The trouble was universal, it is come on our kings, princes, priests, prophets, fathers, and all our people; they had all shared in the sin, ver. 34. and now all shared in the judgment. It was of long continuance, from the time of the kings of Assyria, who carried the ten tribes captive, unto this day; Lord, let it not all seem little, and not worthy to be regarded, or not needing to be relieved. They do not prescribe to God what he shall do for them, but leave it to him, only desiring he would please to take cognizance of it, remembering that when he saw the afflictions of his people in Egypt to be great, he came down to deliver them, *Exod. iii. 7.* In this request they have an eye to God, as one that is to be feared, for he is the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, and one that is to be trusted, for he is our God in covenant, and a God that keeps covenant and mercy.

2. By way of acknowledgment notwithstanding, that really it was less than they deserved, ver. 33. They own the justice of God in all their troubles, that he had done them no wrong; we have done wickedly in breaking thy laws, and therefore thou hast done right in bringing all these miseries upon us. Note, It becomes us when we are under the rebukes of the divine providence, tho' never so sharp, and never so long, to justify God, and to judge ourselves; for he will be *clear when he judgeth*, Psal. li. 4.

6. Here is the result and conclusion of this whole matter; after this long remonstrance of their case was made, they came at last to this resolution, that they would return to God, and to their duty, and oblige themselves never to forsake God, but always to continue in their duty. Because of all this we make a sure covenant with God; in consideration of our frequent departures from God, we will now more firmly than ever bind ourselves to him. Because we have smarted so much for sin, we will now stedfastly resolve against it, that we may not any more withdraw the shoulder. Observe, 1. This covenant was made with serious consideration; it is the result of a chain of suitable thoughts; and so is a reasonable service. 2. With great solemnity. It was written *in perpetuum rei memoriam*, it was sealed to, and left upon record, that it might be a witness against them if they dealt deceitfully. 3. With joint-consent: We make it, we are all agreed in it, and do it unanimously, that we may strengthen the hands one of another. 4. With fixed resolution, it is a sure covenant, without reserving a power of revocation. It is what we will live and die by, and never go back from. A certain number of the princes, priests, and Levites, were chosen as the representatives of the congregation, to subscribe and seal it, for and in the name of the rest. Now was fulfilled that promise concerning the Jews, that when they were returned out of captivity, they should *join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant*, *Jer. l. 5.* and that *Isa. xlv. 5.* that they should *subscribe with their hand unto their Lord*; and he that bears an honest mind will not startle at assurances; nor will those that know the deceitfulness of their own hearts think them needless.

## CHAP. X.

We have in this chapter a particular account of the covenant which in the close of the foregoing chapter was resolved upon; they struck while the iron was hot, and immediately put that good resolve in execution, when they were in a good frame, lest if it had been delayed it had been dropped. Here is, (1.) The names of those that set their hands and seals to it, ver. 1—27. (2.) An account of those who signified their consent and concurrence, ver. 28, 29. (3.) The covenant itself, and the articles of it in general, that they would keep God's commandments, ver. 29. in particular, that they would not marry with the heathen, ver. 30. nor profane the sabbath, or be rigorous with their debtors, ver. 31. And that they would carefully pay their church-duties, for the maintenance of the temple-service, which they promise faithfully to adhere to, ver. 32—39.

1. **N**OW those that sealed were, Nehemiah the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah, 2. Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, 3. Puthur, Ananiah, Malchijah, 4. Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, 5. Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, 6. Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, 7. Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, 8. Maaziah, Bilgai,



Bilgai, Shemaiah : these were the priests. 9. And the Levites : both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel ; 10. And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, 11. Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, 12. Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, 13. Hodijah, Bani, Beninu. 14. The chief of the people ; Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, 15. Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, 16. Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, 17. Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur, 18. Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, 19. Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, 20. Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, 21. Meshazbeel, Zadok, Jaddua, 22. Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, 23. Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub, 24. Halloheh, Pileha, Shobek, 25. Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, 26. And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, 27. Malluch, Harim, Baanah. 28. ¶ And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands, unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding : 29. They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in Gods law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes : 30. And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons : 31. And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath-day, to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy-day : and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

When Israel was first brought into covenant with God, it was done by sacrifice, and the sprinkling of blood, *Exod.* xxiv. But here it was done by the more natural and common way of sealing and subscribing the written articles of the covenant, which bound them to no more than was already their duty.

Now here we have,

1. The names of those publick persons who, as the representatives and heads of the congregation, set their hands and seals to this covenant, because it would have been an endless piece of work for every particular person to have done it. And if these leading men did their part in pursuance of this covenant, it would have a good influence upon all the people.

Now observe, (1.) Nehemiah, who was the governor, signed first, to shew his forwardness in this work, and to set others a good example, *ver.* 1. Those that are above others in dignity and power, should go before them in the way of God. (2.) Next to him subscribed twenty-two priests, among whom I wonder we do not find Ezra, who was an active man in the solemnity, *chap.* viii. 2. which was but the first day of this same month, and therefore we cannot think he was absent, but he having before done his part as a scribe, now left it to others to do theirs. (3.) Next to the priests, seventeen Levites subscribed this covenant, among whom we find all or most of those who were the mouth of the congregation in prayer, *chap.* ix. 4, 5. Which shewed that they themselves were affected with what they had said, and would not bind those burthens on others which they themselves declined to touch. They that lead in prayer, should lead in every other good work. (4.) Next to the Levites, forty-four of the chief of the people, gave it under their hands for themselves and all the rest, chiefly those whom they had influence upon, that they would keep God's commandments. Their names are left upon record here to their honour, as men that were forward and active, in reviving and endeavouring to perpetuate religion in their country : the memory of such shall be blessed. It is observable, that most of those who were mentioned, *chap.* vii. 8, &c. as heads of houses or clans, are here mentioned among the first of the chief of the people that subscribed ; whoever was the present head bearing the name of him that was head when they came out of Babylon, and these were fittest to subscribe for all those of their fathers house. Here is, Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, *ver.* 14. Azgad, Bebai, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hashum, Bezai, Hariph, Anathoth, and some others in the following verses, that are all found in that catalogue. They that have interest must use it for God.

2. The concurrence of the rest of the people with them, and the rest of the priests and Levites, who signified their consent to what their chiefs did. With them joined (1.) Their wives and children, for they had transgressed ; and they must reform ; every one that had knowledge and understanding, must covenant with God. As soon as young people grow up to be capable of distinguishing between good and evil, and of acting intelligently, they ought to make it their own act and deed, to join themselves to the Lord. (2.) The proselytes of other nations, all that had separated themselves from the people of the lands, their gods, and their

worships, unto the law of God, and the observance of that law. See what conversion is, it is separating ourselves from the course and custom of this world, and devoting ourselves to the conduct of the word of God. And as there is one law, so there is one covenant, one baptism for the stranger, and for him that is born in the land.

Observe how the concurrence of the people is expressed, *ver.* 29. (1.) They clave to their brethren ; one and all. Here whom the court blessed, the country blessed too ! The commonalty agreed with their nobles in this good work. Great men never look so great, as when they encourage religion, and are examples of it ; and they would by that, as much as any thing, make an interest in the most valuable of their inferiors. Let but nobles cordially espouse religious causes, and perhaps they will find people cleave to them therein closer than they can imagine. Observe, their nobles are called their brethren, for in the things of God rich and poor, high and low, meet together. (2.) They entered into a curse and an oath. As the nobles confirmed the covenant with their hands and seals, so the people with a curse and an oath ; solemnly appealing to God concerning their sincerity, and imprecating his just revenges if they dealt deceitfully. Every oath has in it a conditional curse upon the soul, which makes it a strong bond upon the soul ; for our own tongues, if false and lying tongues will fall, and fall heavy upon ourselves.

3. The general purport of this covenant. They laid upon themselves no other burthen but this necessary thing, which they were already obliged to by all other engagements of duty, interest, and gratitude, to walk in God's law, and to do all his commandments, *ver.* 29. This was it which David swore, that he would keep God's righteous judgments, *Psal.* cxix. 106. Our own covenant binds us to this, if not more strongly, yet more sensibly than we were before bound, and therefore we must not think it needless thus to bind ourselves. Observe, When we bind ourselves to do, we bind ourselves to do all the commandments of God, and therein to have an eye to him as the Lord, and our lord.

4. Some of the particular articles of this covenant. Such as were adapted to their present temptations.

1. That they would not intermarry with the heathen, *ver.* 30. Many of them had been guilty of this, *Ezra* ix. 1. In our covenants with God, we should engage particularly against those sins that we have been most frequently overtaken in, and damaged by. They that resolve to keep the commandments of God, must say to evil doers, depart, *Psal.* cxix. 115.

2. That they would keep no markets on the sabbath-day, or any other day of which the law had said, *ye shall do no work therein.* They would not only not sell goods themselves for gain on that day, but they would not encourage the heathen to sell on that day, by buying of them, nor not victuals under pretence of necessity, but would buy in their provisions for their families the day before, *ver.* 31. Note, Those that covenant to keep all God's commandments, must particularly covenant to keep sabbaths well, for the profanation of them is an inlet to other instances of profaneness. The sabbath is a market-day for our souls, but not for our bodies.

3. That they would not be severe in exacting their debts, but would observe the seventh year as a year of release, according to the law, *ver.* 31. In this matter they had been faulty, *chap.* v. and here therefore they promise to reform. This was the acceptable feast, to undo the heavy burthen, and to let the oppressed go free, *Isa.* lviii. 6. It was in the close of the day of expiation, that the jubilee trumpet sounded. It was for the neglect of observing the seventh year as a year of rest for the land, that God had made it enjoy its sabbaths seventy years, *Lev.* xxvi. 35. and therefore they covenanted to observe that law. Those are stubborn children indeed, that will not amend the fault which they have been particularly corrected for.

32. Also we made ordinances for us, to charge our selves yearly with the third part of a shekel, for the service of the house of our God, 33. For the shew-bread, and for the continual meat-offering, and for the continual burnt-offering, of the sabbaths, of the new-moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin-offerings, to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. 34. And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood-offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed, year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law : 35. And to bring the first-fruits of our ground, and the first-fruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD : 36. Also the first-born of our sons and of our cattle, (as it is written in the law) and the firstlings of our herds, and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God : 37. And that we should



should bring the first-fruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine, and of oyl, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. 38. And the priest the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure-house. 39. For the children of Israel, and the children of Levi, shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oyl, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

Having covenanted against the sins they had been guilty of, they proceed in obliging themselves to revive and observe the duties they had neglected. We must not only *cease to do evil*, but *learn to do well*.

1. It was resolved in general, that the temple-service should be carefully kept up, that the work of the house of their God should be done in its season, according to the law, *ver. 33*. Let not any people expect the blessing of God, unless they make conscience of observing his ordinances, and keeping up the publick worship of him. Then it is likely to go well with our houses, when care is taken that the work of God's house go on well. It was likewise resolved, that they would never *forsake the house of their God*, *ver. 39*. as they and their fathers had done; not forsake it for the house of any other god, or for the high places, as idolaters did; nor forsake it for their farms and merchandizes, as those did that were atheistical and profane. They that forsake the worship of God, forsake God.

2. It was resolved in pursuance of this, that they would liberally maintain the temple-service, and not starve it. The priests were ready to do their part in all the work of God's house, if the people would do theirs, which was to find them with materials to work upon. Now here it was agreed and concluded,

1. That a stock should be raised for the furnishing of God's table and altar plentifully. Formerly there were treasures in the house of the Lord for this purpose, but those were gone, and there was no settled fund to supply the want of them; it was a constant charge to provide shew-bread for the table, two lambs for the daily offerings, four for the sabbaths, and more and more costly sacrifices for other festivals, occasional sin-offerings, and meat-offerings, and drink-offerings for them all; they had no rich king to provide these, as Hezekiah did; the priests could not afford it, their maintenance was so small. The people therefore agreed to contribute yearly each of them the third part of a shekel, about ten pence apiece, for the bearing of this expence. When every one will act, and every one will give, tho' but a little towards a good work, it will amount to something in the whole. The Tiroshatha did not impose this tax, but the people made it an ordinance for themselves, and charged themselves with it, *ver. 32, 33*.

2. That particular care should be taken to provide wood for the altar, to keep the fire always burning upon it; and wherewith to boil the peace-offerings: Each of them priests and Levites, as well as people, agreed to bring in their quota, and cast lots in what order they should bring it in, which family first, and which next, that there might be a constant supply, and not a scarcity at one time, and an overplus at another, *ver. 34*. Thus they provided the fire and the wood, as well as the lambs for the burnt-offerings.

3. That all those things which the divine law had appointed for the maintenance of the priests and Levites, should be duly paid in, for their encouragement to mind their business, and that they might not be under any temptation to neglect it, for the making of necessary provision for their families. Then the work of the house of God is likely to go on, when those that serve at the altar live, and live comfortably upon the altar. First-fruits and tenths, were then the principal branches of the ministers revenues; and they here resolve (1.) To bring in their first-fruits justly, of their ground and trees, *Exod. xxiii. 19. Lev. xix. 23*. The first-born of their children, even the money wherewith they were to be redeemed; and of their cattle, *Exod. xiii. 2, 11, 12*. This was given to the priests, *Num. xviii. 15, 16*. Also the first-fruits of their dough, *Num. xv. 21*. Concerning which, there is a particular order given in the prophecy concerning the second temple, *Ezek. xlv. 30*. (2.) To bring in their tenths likewise, which were due to the Levites, *ver. 37*. and a tenth out of those tenths to the priest, *ver. 38*. This was the law, *Num. xviii. 21—28*. But these dues had been with-held, for which God by the prophet chargeth them with *robbing him*, *Mal. iii. 8, 9*. and encourageth them to be more just to him and his receivers, with a promise that if they brought the *tithes into the store-house* he would *pour out blessings upon them*, *ver. 10*. This therefore they resolve to do, that there might be meat in God's house, and plenty in the store-chambers of the temple, where the vessels of the sanctuary were, *ver. 39*.

We will do it (say they) *in all the cities of our tillage*, *ver. 37*. *In all the cities of our servitude*, so the LXX, for they were servants in their own land, *chap. ix. 36*. But (as Mr Poole well observes) tho' they paid great taxes to the kings of Persia, and had much hardship put upon them, they would not make that an excuse for not paying their tithes, but would render to God the things that were his, as well as to Cæsar the things that were his. We must do what we can in works of piety and charity, notwithstanding the taxes we pay to the government; and cheerfully perform our duty to God in our servitude, which will be the surest way to ease and liberty in God's due time.

## C H A P. XI.

*Jerusalem was walled round, but it was not as yet fully inhabited, and therefore weak and despicable. Nehemiah's next care is to bring people into it, of that we have here an account. (1.) The methods taken to replenish it, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The principal persons that resided there, of Judah and Benjamin, ver. 3—9. Of the priests and Levites, ver. 10—19. (3.) The several cities and villages of Judah and Benjamin, that were peopled by the rest of their families, ver. 20—36.*

1. **A**ND the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten, to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. 2. And the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem. 3. ¶ Now these are the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomons servants. 4. And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin: of the children of Judah; Athaiah the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Perez; 5. And Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Colhozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni. 6. All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem, were four hundred threescore and eight valiant men. 7. And these are the sons of Benjamin, Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah. 8. And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight. 9. And Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer: and Judah the son of Senuah, was second over the city. 10. Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin. 11. Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, was the ruler of the house of God. 12. And their brethren that did the work of the house, were eight hundred twenty and two: and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah, 13. And his brethren chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two: and Amashai, the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, 14. And their brethren mighty men of valour, an hundred twenty and eight: and their overseer was Zabdiel, the son of one of the great men. 15. Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni. 16. And Shabbethai, and Jozabad of the chief of the Levites, had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God, 17. And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. 18. All the Levites in the holy city, were two hundred fourscore and four. 19. Moreover, the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, were an hundred seventy and two.

Jerusalem is called here the *holy city*, *ver. 1*. because there the temple was, and that was the place God had chosen to put his name there; upon this account one would think the holy seed should have all chosen to dwell there, and have striven for a habitation



tation there ; but, on the contrary, it seems they declined dwelling there ; either (1.) Because a greater strictness of conversation was expected from the inhabitants of Jerusalem than from others, which they were not willing to come up to ; those who care not for being holy themselves, are shy of dwelling in a holy city ; they would not dwell in the *New Jerusalem* itself for that reason, but would wish to have a continuing city here upon earth. Or (2.) Because Jerusalem of all places was most hated by the heathen their neighbours, and against it their malicious designs were levelled, which made that the post of danger, as the post of honour uses to be, and therefore they were not willing to expose themselves there. Fear of persecution and reproach, and running themselves into trouble, keeps many out of the holy city, and makes them backward to appear for God and religion, not considering that as Jerusalem is with a special malice threatened and insulted by its enemies, so it is with a special care protected by its God, and made a *quiet habitation*, Psal. xlv. 4, 5. Or (3.) Because it was more for their worldly advantage to dwell in the country. Jerusalem was no trading city, and therefore there was no money to be got there by merchandises, as there was in the country by corn and cattle. Note, All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's, *Phil.* ii. 21. It is a general and just complaint, that most people prefer their own wealth, credit, pleasure, ease, and safety, before the glory of God, and the publick good.

People being thus backward to dwell at Jerusalem, now it was poor, we are here told,

1. By what means it was replenished. (1.) The rulers dwelt there, *ver.* 1. That was the proper place for them to reside in, because *there were set the thrones of judgment*, Psal. cxxii. 5. and thither in all difficult matters the people resorted with their last appeals. And if it were an instance of eminent affection to the house of God, zeal for the publick good, and of faith and holy courage and self-denial, to dwell there at this time, the rulers would be examples of these to their inferiors. Their dwelling there, would invite and encourage others to dwell there too ; *Magnates, Magnetes*. When great men would chuse the holy city for their habitation, it brings holiness into reputation, and their zeal will provoke very many. (2.) There were some that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem, bravely postponing their own secular interest to the publick welfare, *ver.* 2. It is upon record to their honour, that when others were shy of venturing upon difficulty, loss and danger, they *sought the good of Jerusalem, because of the house of the Lord their God : They shall prosper that thus love Zion*, Psal. cxx. 6, 9. It is said *the people blessed them*. They praised them, they prayed for them, they praised God for them. Many that do not appear forward themselves for the publick good, will yet give a good word to those that do. God and man will bless those that are publick blessings, which should encourage us to be zealous in doing good. (3.) They finding that *yet there was room*, concluded upon a review of their whole body, to bring one in ten to dwell in Jerusalem, and who they should be, was determined by lot, the disposal whereof all knew was of the Lord. This would prevent strife, and would be a great satisfaction to those on whom the lot fell to dwell at Jerusalem, that they plainly saw God appointing the bounds of their habitation. The proportion they observed of one in ten, as we may suppose it, to bring the balance between the city and country to a just and equal poise, so it seems to refer to the ancient rule of giving the tenth to God ; and what is given to the holy city, he reckons given to himself.

2. By what persons it was replenished. A general account is here given of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because the *governors of Judah* looked upon them as *their strength in the Lord of hosts their God*, and valued them accordingly, *Zech.* xii. 5.

1. Many of the children of Judah and Benjamin dwelt there, for originally part of the city lay in the lot of one of those tribes, and part in that of the other ; but the greater part was in the lot of Benjamin, and therefore here we find of the children of Judah but four hundred sixty-eight families in Jerusalem, *ver.* 6. but of Benjamin, nine hundred twenty-eight, *ver.* 6, 8. Thus small were its beginnings, but afterwards, before our Saviour's time it grew much more populous. Those of Judah all descended from Perez, or Pharez, that son of Judah, of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came. And tho' the Benjamites were more in number, yet of the men of Judah, it is said, *ver.* 6. they were valiant men, fit for service, and able to defend the city in case of an attack. Judah has not lost its ancient character of a lion's whelp, bold and daring. Of the Benjamites that dwelt in Jerusalem, we are here told who was overseer, and who his second, *ver.* 9. For it is as necessary for a people to have good order kept up among themselves, as to be fortified against the attacks of their enemies from abroad ; to have good magistrates as to have good soldiers.

2. The priests and Levites did many of them settle at Jerusalem ; where else should men that were holy to God dwell, but in the holy city ?

1. Most of the priests we may suppose dwelt there, for their business lay where the temple was. Of them that did the work of the house in their courses, here were eight hundred twenty-two of one family, two hundred forty-two of another, and one hundred twenty-eight of another, *ver.* 12, 13, 14. It was well those la-

bourers were not few. It is said of some of them, that they were *mighty men of valour*, *ver.* 14. and so they had need, for the priesthood was not only a work which required might, but a warfare, which required valour, especially now. Of one of these priests, it is said, he was *the son of one of the great men* : And it was no disparagement to the greatest men they had, to have his son in the priesthood ; he might magnify his office, for his office did not in the least diminish him.

2. Some of the Levites also came and dwelt at Jerusalem, yet but few in comparison, two hundred eighty-four in all, *ver.* 18. with one hundred seventy-two porters, *ver.* 19. Because much of their work was to *teach the good knowledge of God* up and down the country, for which purpose they were to be scattered in Israel ; as many as there was occasion for attended at Jerusalem, the rest were doing good elsewhere. (1.) It is said of one of the Levites, that he had *the oversight of the outward business of the house of God*, *ver.* 16. The priests were chief managers of the business within the temple-gates ; but this Levite was entrusted with the secular concerns of God's house, that were *in ordine ad spiritualia*, the collecting of the contributions, the providing of materials for the temple-service, and the like, which it was necessary to oversee, else the inward business would have been starved, and stood still. Those that take care of the *τὰ ἔξω* of the church, the serving of its tables, are as necessary in their place, as those that take care of its *τὰ ἔσω*, who give themselves to the word and prayer. (2.) It is said of another, that he was *the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer* : It is likely he had a good ear, and a good voice, and was an artist at singing, and therefore was chosen to lead the psalm. He was *præcentor* in the temple. Observe, Thanksgiving is necessary in prayer ; they should go together : giving thanks for the former mercies is a decent way of begging further mercies. And care should be taken in publick service, that every thing be done in the best manner, *decently and in good order* ; in prayer that one speak, and the rest join ; in singing that one begin, and the rest follow.

20. ¶ And the residue of Israel, of the priests and the Levites were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance. 21. But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel : and Ziha, and Gispa were over the Nethinims. 22. The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem, was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha : of the sons of Asaph, the singers were over the business of the house of God. 23. For it was the kings commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day. 24. And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah, the son of Judah, was at the kings hand in all matters concerning the people. 25. And for the villages, with their fields, some of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjath-arba, and in the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and in the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and in the villages thereof, 26. And at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Beth-phelet, 27. And at Hazar-shual, and at Beer-sheba, and in the villages thereof, 28. And at Ziklag, and at Mekonah and in the villages thereof, 29. And at En-rimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth, 30. Zanoah, Adullam, and in their villages, at Lachish and the fields thereof, at Azekah and in the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beer-sheba, unto the valley of Hinnom. 31. The children also of Benjamin, from Geba, dwelt at Michmash, and Aija, and Beth-el, and in their villages, 32. And at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, 33. Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, 34. Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, 35. Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. 36. And of the Levites, were divisions in Judah, and in Benjamin.

Having given an account of the principal persons that dwelt in Jerusalem, a larger account of whom we had before, 1 *Chron.* ix. 2, &c. Nehemiah in these verses, gives us some account of the other cities, in which dwelt *the residue of Israel*, *ver.* 20. It was requisite Jerusalem should be replenished, yet not so as to drain the country ; *the king himself is served of the field*, which will do little service if there be not hands to manage it : let there therefore be no strife, no envy, no contempt, no ill will, between the inhabitants of the cities, and those of the villages, both are needful, both useful, and neither can be spared.

1. The Nethinims, the posterity of the Gibeonites dwelt in Ophel, which was upon the wall of Jerusalem, *chap.* iii. 26. because they were to do the servile work of the temple, which therefore they must be posted near to, that they might be ready to attend, *ver.* 21.

2. Tho' the Levites were dispersed through the cities of Judah, yet they had an overseer who resided at Jerusalem, superiour of their order, and their provincial, to whom they applied themselves for



for direction, who took care of their affairs, and took cognizance of their carriage, whether they did their duty, *ver.* 22.

3. Some of the fingers were appointed to look after the necessary repairs of the temple, being ingenious men, and having leisure betwixt their hours of service: they were *over the business of the house of God*, *ver.* 22. And it seems the king of Persia had such a kindness for their office, that he allotted a particular maintenance for them, besides what belonged to them as Levites, *ver.* 23.

4. Here is one that was the king's commissioner at Jerusalem, he was of the posterity of Zerah, *ver.* 24. For of that family of Judah, there were some now settled in Jerusalem, and not all of Pharez, as appears by that other catalogue, *1 Chron.* ix. 6. He is said to be *at the king's hand, or on the king's part, in all matters concerning the people*, to determine controversies that arose between the king's officers and his subjects; to see that what was due to the king from the people, was duly paid in, and what was allowed by the king for the temple-service, was duly paid out; and happy it was for the Jews, that one of themselves was in this post.

5. Here is an account of the villages, or country towns, which were inhabited by the residue of Israel. The towns in which the children of Judah dwelt, *ver.* 25—30. And those that were inhabited by the children of Benjamin, *ver.* 31—35. And divisions for the Levites among both, *ver.* 36. We will now suppose them safe and easy, tho' few and poor, but, by the blessing of God, likely to increase in wealth and power; and more likely if there had not been that general profaneness among them, and lukewarmness in religion, which the prophet Malachi chargeth them with in God's name, who, it is supposed, prophesied about this time, and in whom prophecy ceased for some ages, till it revived in the great prophet and his fore-runner.

## C H A P. XII.

*In this chapter is preserved upon record, (1.) The names of the chief of the priests and the Levites, that came up with Zerubbabel, ver. 1—9. (2.) The succession of the high-priests, ver. 10, 11. (3.) The names of the next generation of the other chief-priests, ver. 12—21. (4.) The eminent Levites that were in Nehemiah's time, ver. 22—26. (5.) The solemnity of dedicating the wall of Jerusalem, ver. 27—43. (6.) The settling of the offices of the priests and Levites in the temple, ver. 44—47.*

1. **N**OW these are the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, 2. Amariah, Maluch, Hattush, 3. Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, 4. Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah, 5. Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, 6. Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, 7. Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah: these were the chief of the priests, and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua. 8. Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. 9. Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, were over against them in the watches. 10. ¶ And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, 11. And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua. 12. And in the days of Joiakim, were priests, the chief of their fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah: of Jeremiah, Hananiah: 13. Of Ezra, Meshullam: of Amariah, Jehohanan: 14. Of Melicu, Jonathan: of Shebaniah, Joseph: 15. Of Harim, Adna: of Meraioth, Helkai: 16. Of Iddo, Zechariah: of Ginnethon, Meshullam: 17. Of Abijah, Zichri: of Minianim, of Moadiah, Piltai: 18. Of Bilgah, Shammua: of Shemaiah, Jehonathan: 19. And of Joiarib, Matthanai: of Jedaiah, Uzzi: 20. Of Sallai, Kallai: of Amok, Eber: 21. Of Hilkiyah, Hashabiah: of Jedaiah, Nethaneel. 22. ¶ The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiadah, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian. 23. The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, were written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. 24. And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel; with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward. 25. Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward, at the thresholds of the gates. 26. These were in the days of Joiakim, the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

We have here the names, and little more than the names of a great many priests and Levites, that were eminent in their day among the returned Jews. Why this register should be here inserted by Nehemiah, doth not appear: perhaps to keep in remembrance those good men, that posterity might know to whom they were beholden, under God, for the happy revival and re-establishment of their religion among them. Thus must we contribute towards the performance of that promise, *Psal.* cxii. 6. that *the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance*. Let the memory of the just be blessed, be perpetuated. It is a debt we still owe to faithful ministers, to *remember our guides* who have *spoken to us the word of God*, *Heb.* xiii. 7. Perhaps it is intended to stir up their posterity, who succeeded them in the priests office, and inherited their dignities and preferments, to imitate their courage and fidelity. It is good to know what our godly ancestors and predecessors were, that we may learn thereby what we should be. We have here,

1. The names of the priests and Levites that came up with the first out of Babylon when Jeshua was high-priest. Jeremiah and Ezra mentioned with the first, *ver.* 1. but it is supposed, not Jeremiah the prophet, or Ezra the scribe, the fame of the one was long before, and the other some time after, tho' both of them were priests, but two others of the same names. Of one of the Levites it is said, *ver.* 8. that he was *over the thanksgiving*, i. e. He was entrusted to see that the psalms, the thanksgiving psalms were constantly sung in the temple, in due time and manner. The Levites kept their turns in their watches, relieving one another as becomes brethren, fellow-labourers, and fellow-soldiers.

2. The succession of high-priests during the Persian monarchy, from Jeshua (or Jesus) who was high-priest at the time of the restoration, to Jaddua (or Jaddus) who was high-priest, when Alexander the Great after the conquest of Tyre came to Jerusalem, and paid great respect to this Jaddus, who met him in his pontifical habit, and shewed him the prophecy of Daniel which foretold his conquests.

3. The next generation of priests, who were chief men, and active in the days of Joiakim, sons of the first set. Note, We have reason to acknowledge God's favour to his church, and care of it, in that as one generation of ministers passeth away, another comes. All these who are mentioned, *ver.* 1, &c. as eminent in their generation, are again mentioned (tho' with some variation in several of the names) *ver.* 12, &c. except two, as having sons that were likewise eminent in their generation; a rare instance that twenty good fathers, should leave behind them twenty good sons (for so many here are) that filled up their places.

4. The next generation of Levites, or rather a latter generation; for those priests mentioned flourished in the days of Joiakim the high-priest, these Levites in the days of Eliashib, *ver.* 22. Perhaps then the forementioned families of the priests began to degenerate, and the third generation of them came short of the two first; but the work of God shall never fail for want of instruments. Then a generation of Levites was raised up, that were recorded chief of the fathers, *ver.* 22. And were eminently serviceable to the interests of the church, and their service not the less acceptable either to God or to his people, for their being Levites only, of the lower rank of ministers. Eliashib the high-priest being allied to Tobiah, *chap.* xiii. 4. The other priests grew remiss, but then the Levites appeared the more zealous, as appears by this, that those who were now employed in expounding, *chap.* viii. 7. and in praying, *chap.* ix. 4, 5. were all Levites, not priests, regard being had to their personal qualifications more than to their order. These Levites were some of them singers, *ver.* 24. to praise and give thanks, others of them porters, *ver.* 25. keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gate; and both according to the command of David.

27. ¶ And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgiving, and with singing with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. 28. And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi, 29. Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba, and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. 30. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall. 31. Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung-gate: 32. And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah, 33. And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, 34. Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, 35. And certain of the priests sons with trumpets: namely, Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph: 36. And his brethren,



brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. 37. And at the fountain-gate which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water-gate east-ward. 38. And the other company of them that gave thanks, went over against them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces, even unto the broad wall: 39. And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish-gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep-gate: and they stood still in the prison-gate. 40. So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me: 41. And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elieoenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah with trumpets: 42. And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer: and the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. 43. Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

We have read of the building of the wall of Jerusalem, with a great deal of fear and trembling, we have here an account of the dedicating of it with a great deal of joy and triumph. They that *sow in tears shall thus reap*.

1. We must enquire what was the meaning of this dedication of the wall; we will suppose it to include the dedication of the city too, (*continens pro contento*) and therefore it was not done till the city was pretty well replenished, chap. xi. (1.) It was a solemn thanksgiving to God for his great mercy to them, in the perfecting of this undertaking, which they were the more sensible of, because of the difficulty and opposition they had met with in it. (2.) They hereby devoted the city in a peculiar manner to God and to his honour, and took possession of it for him and in his name. All our cities, all our houses, must have holiness to the Lord written upon them, but this city was (so as never any other was) a *holy city*, the city of the great king, Psal. xlviii. 2. and Mat. v. 35. it had been so ever since God chose it to put his name there, and as such it being now refitted; it was afresh dedicated to God by the builders and inhabitants, in token of their acknowledgment that they were his tenants, and their desire that it might still be his, and that the property of it might never be altered. Whatever is done for their safety, ease, and comfort, must be designed for God's honour and glory. (3.) They hereby put the city and its walls under the divine protection, owning that *unless the Lord kept the city, the walls were built in vain*. When this city was in possession of the Jebusites, they committed the guardianship of it to their gods, tho' they were blind and lame ones, 2 Sam. v. 6. With much more reason do the people of God commit it to his keeping, who is All-wise and Almighty. The superstitious founders of cities, had an eye to the lucky position of the heavens, (see Mr Gregory's works, page 29, &c.) but these pious founders had an eye to God only, to his providence, and not to fortune.

2. We must observe with what solemnity it was performed, under the direction of Nehemiah.

1. The Levites from all parts of the country were summoned to attend. The city must be dedicated to God, and therefore his ministers must be employed in the doing of it, and the surrender must pass through their hands. When those solemn feasts were over, chap. viii. and ix. they were gone home to their respective posts, to mind their cures in the country, but now their presence and assistance was again called for.

2. Pursuant to those summons there was a general rendezvous of all the Levites, ver. 28, 29. And observe in what method they proceeded.

(1.) They purified themselves, ver. 30. We are concerned to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts, when any work for God is to pass thro' them. Themselves they purified, and then the people; they that would be instrumental to sanctify others, must sanctify themselves, and set themselves apart for God, with purity of mind and sincerity of intention. Then they purified the gates and the wall. Then may we expect comfort, when we are prepared to receive it. *To the pure all things are pure*, Tit. i. 15. And to them who are sanctified, houses and tables, and all their creature-comforts and enjoyments are sanctified, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. This purification was performed, it is probable, by sprinkling the water of purifying, or of separation, (as it is called, Numb. xix. 9.) on themselves and the people, the walls and the gates; a type of the blood of Christ, with which our consciences being purged from dead

works, we become fit to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 14. and to be his care.

(2.) The princes, priests, and Levites, walked round upon the wall in two companies, to signify the dedication of it all to God, the whole circuit of it, with musical instruments, ver. 36. So that it is likely they sung psalms as they went along, to the praise and glory of God. This procession is here largely described. They had a rendezvous at one certain place, where they divided themselves into two companies. Half of the princes, with several priests and Levites, went on the right hand, Ezra leading their van, ver. 36. The other half of the princes and priests, who gave thanks, likewise went to the left hand, Nehemiah bringing up the rear, ver. 38. And at length both companies met in the temple, where they joined their thanksgivings, ver. 40. The crowd of people; it is likely, walked on the ground, some within the wall, and others without, one end of this ceremony being to affect them with the mercy they were giving thanks for, and to perpetuate the remembrance of it among them, and for that intent such cavalcades have their use.

(3.) The people greatly rejoiced, ver. 43. While the princes, priests and Levites, testify their joy and thankfulness, by great sacrifices, sound of trumpet, musical instruments, and songs of praise, the common people testified theirs by loud shouts, which were heard afar off, further than the more harmonious sound of their songs and musick; and these shouts coming from a sincere and hearty joy are here taken notice of: for God overlooks not, but graciously accepts the honest zealous services of mean people, tho' there be in them little of art, and they are far from being fine. It is observed, that the women and children rejoiced, and their Hosannas were not despised, but recorded to their praise. All that share in publick mercies, ought to join in publick thanksgivings. The reason given is, that *God had made them rejoice with great joy*; he had given them both matter for joy, and hearts to rejoice; his providence had made them safe and easy, and then his grace made them chearful and thankful. The baffled opposition of their enemies, no doubt, added to their joy, and mixed triumph with it. Great mercies call for the most solemn returns of praise, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.

44. ¶ And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the first-fruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests, and for the Levites that waited. 45. And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. 46. For in the days of David and Asaph, of old, there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. 47. And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers, and the porters every day his portion, and they sanctified holy things unto the Levites, and the Levites sanctified them unto the children of Aaron.

We have here an account of the remaining good effects of the universal joy that was at the dedication of the wall. When the solemnities of a thanksgiving-day, leave such impressions on ministers and people, as that both are more careful and chearful in doing their duty afterward; then are they indeed acceptable to God, and turn to a good account. So it was here.

1. The ministers were more careful than they had been of their work; the respect the people paid them upon this occasion, encouraged them to diligence and watchfulness, ver. 45. The singers kept the ward of their God, attending in due time to the duty of their office; the porters too, they kept the ward of the purification, i. e. they took care to preserve the purity of the temple, by denying admission to those that were ceremonially unclean. When the joy of the Lord thus engageth us to our duty, and enlargeth us in it; it is then an earnest of that joy, which in concurrence with the perfection of holiness, will be our everlasting bliss.

2. The people were more careful than they had been of the maintenance of their ministers. The people at the dedication of the wall, among other things which they made matter of their joy, rejoiced for the priests, and for the Levites that waited, ver. 44. They had a great deal of comfort in their ministers, and were glad of them; when they observed how diligently they waited, and what pains they took in their work, they rejoiced in them. Note, The surest way for ministers to recommend themselves to their people, and gain an interest in their affections, is to wait on their ministry, Rom. xii. 7. to be humble and industrious, and to mind their business; when these did so, the people thought nothing too much to do for them, to encourage them. The law had provided them their portions, ver. 44. But what the better were they



they for that provision, if what the law appointed them either was not duly collected, or not justly paid them.

Now, 1. Care is here taken for the collecting of their dues; they were modest and would rather lose their right, than call for it themselves; the people were many of them careless, and would not bring it unless they were called upon; and therefore *some were appointed*, whose office it should be to gather into the treasuries *out of the fields of the cities, the portions of the law for the priests and Levites*, ver. 44. that their portion might not be lost for want of being demanded. This is a piece of good service both to ministers and people, that the one may not come short of their maintenance, nor the other of their duty.

2. Care is taken, that being *gathered in*, it might be duly *paid out*, ver. 47. They gave the singers and porters their daily portion, over and above what was due to them as Levites; for we may suppose when David and Solomon appointed them their work (ver. 45, 46.) above what was required from them as Levites, they settled a fund for their further encouragement. Let those that labour more abundantly in the word and doctrine, be counted worthy of this double honour. As for the other Levites, the tithes, here called the holy things, were duly set apart for them, out of which they paid the priests their tithe according to the law. Both are said to be sanctified; when what is contributed either voluntarily or by law, for the support of religion, and the maintenance of the ministry, is given with an eye to God and his honour, it is sanctified, and shall be accepted of him accordingly, and it will *cause the blessing to rest on the house*, and all that is in it, *Ezek. xlv. 30.*

## C H A P. XIII.

*Nehemiah having finished what he undertook for the fencing and filling of the holy city, returned to the king his master, who could not long be without him, as appears, ver. 6. But after some time got leave to come back again to Jerusalem to redress grievances, and purge out some corruptions which had crept in in his absence; and very active he was in reforming several abuses, which here we have an account of. (1.) He turned out from Israel the mixed multitude, the Moabites and Ammonites especially, ver. 1—3. And Tobiah with a particular indignation, he expelled out of the lodgings he had got in the court of the temple, ver. 4—9. (2.) He secured the maintenance of the priests and Levites to them more firmly than it had been, ver. 10—14. (3.) He restrained the profanation of the sabbath-day, and provided for the due sanctification of it, ver. 15—22. (4.) He checked the growing mischief of marrying strange wives, ver. 23—31.*

1. **O**N that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite, and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; 2. Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3. Now it came to pass when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude. 4. ¶ And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: 5. And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat-offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oyl, (which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers and the porters) and the offerings of the priests. 6. But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon, came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: 7. And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil, that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. 8. And it grieved me sore, therefore I cast forth all the household-stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. 9. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers; and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat-offering, and the frankincense.

It was the honour of Israel, and the greatest preservation of their holiness, that they were a peculiar people, and were so to keep themselves, and not to mingle with the nations, nor suffer any of them to incorporate with them.

Now here we have,

1. The law to this purpose, which happened to be read on that day, in the audience of the people, ver. 1. on the day of the dedication of the wall, as it should seem, for with their prayer

and praises they joined the reading of the word; and tho' it was long after that the other grievances here mentioned, were redressed by Nehemiah's power; yet this of the mixed multitude, might be redressed by the people's own act, for so it seems to be, ver. 3. Or perhaps it was on the anniversary commemoration of that day, some years after, and therefore said to be on that day. They found a law that the Ammonites and Moabites should not be naturalized, should not settle among them, nor unite with them, ver. 1. And the reason given, is because they had been injurious and ill-natured to the Israel of God, ver. 2. had not shewed them common civility, but sought their ruin, tho' they not only did them no harm, but were expressly forbidden to do them any. This law we have with this reason, *Deut. xxiii. 3, 4, 5.*

2. The peoples ready compliance with this law, ver. 3. See the benefit of the publick reading of the word of God, when it is duly attended to, it discovers to us sin and duty, good and evil, and shews us wherein we have erred. And then we profit by the discovery, when by it we are wrought upon to separate our selves from all that evil to which we had addicted ourselves. They *separated from Israel all the mixed multitude*, which had of old been a snare to them, for the *mixed multitude fell a lusting*, Num. xi. 4. These inmates they expelled, as usurpers and dangerous.

3. The particular case of Tobiah, who was an Ammonite, and to whom, it is likely, the historian had an eye in the recital of that law, ver. 1. and the reason of it, ver. 2. For he had the same enmity to Israel that his ancestors had, the spirit of an Ammonite, witness his indignation at Nehemiah, chap. ii. 10. and the opposition he had given to his undertakings, chap. iv. 7. Observe,

1. How basely Eliashib the chief-priest took this Tobiah in, to be a lodger even in the courts of the temple. (1.) He was allied to Tobiah, ver. 4. by marriage first, and then by friendship: His grandson had married Sanballat's daughter, ver. 28. And it is likely some other of his family had married Tobiah's, and (would you think it?) the high-priest thought the alliance an honour to his family, and was mighty proud of it, tho' really it was his greatest disgrace, and what he had reason to be ashamed of. It was expressly provided by the law, that the high-priest should marry *one of his own people*, else he *profanes his seed among his people*, Lev. xxi. 14. And for Eliashib to contract an alliance with an Ammonite, a servant (for so he is called) and to value himself upon it, probably because he was a wit, and a beau, and cried up for a pretty gentleman, chap. vi. 19. was such a contempt of the crown of his consecration, as one would not wish should be told in Gath, or published in the streets of Ashkelon.

(2.) Being allied to him, he must be acquainted with him, Tobiah, being a man of business, has oft occasion to be at Jerusalem, I doubt upon no good design, Eliashib is fond of his new kinsman, pleased with his company, and must have him as near him as he can; he has not a room for him stately enough in his own apartment, in the courts of the temple; therefore out of several little chambers, which had been used for store-chambers, by taking down the partitions, he contrived to make one great chamber, a state-room, for Tobiah, ver. 5. A wretched thing it was, (1.) That Tobiah the Ammonite should be entertained with respect in Israel, and have a magnificent reception. (2.) That the high-priest who should have taught the people the law, and set them a good example, should, contrary to the law, give him entertainment, and make use of the power he had as overseer of the chambers of the temple, for that purpose. (3.) That he should lodge him in the courts of God's house; as it were to confront God himself; this was next to setting up an idol there, as the wicked kings of old had done. An Ammonite must not *come into the congregation*, and shall one of the worst and vilest of the Ammonites be courted into the temple itself, and caressed there. (4.) That he should throw out the stores of the temple, to make room for him, and so expose them to be lost, wasted, and embezzled, tho' they were the *portions of the priests*, merely to gratify Tobiah. Thus did he *corrupt the covenant of Levi*, as Malachi complained at this time, chap. ii. 8. Well might Nehemiah add, ver. 7. *But all this time was not I at Jerusalem*: If he had been there, the high-priest durst not have done such a thing. The envious one that sows tares in God's field, knows how to take an opportunity to do it when the *servants sleep*, or are absent, Mat. xiii. 25. The golden calf was made when Moses was in the mount.

2. How bravely Nehemiah, the chief governor, threw him out, and all that belonged to him, and restored the chambers to their proper use: when he came to Jerusalem, and was informed by the good people, who were troubled at it, what an intimacy was grown between their chief priest, and their chief enemy, it *grieved him sore*, ver. 7, 8. that God's house should be so profaned, his enemies so caressed and trusted, and his cause betrayed by him that should be its protector and patron. Nothing grieves a good man, a good magistrate more, than to see the ministers of God's house do any ill thing. Nehemiah has power, and he will use it for God. (1.) Tobiah shall out, he fears not disobliging him, fears not his resentments, or Eliashib's, nor excuseth himself from interposing in an affair that lay within the jurisdiction of the high-priest, but like one zealously affected in a good thing, expelled the intruder, by casting forth all his household-stuff; he did not seize



it for his own use, but cast it out, that Tobiah, who, it was probable, was now absent, when he came again, might have no conveniences for his reception there: Our Saviour thus *cleansed the temple*, that the *house of prayer* might not be a *den of thieves*. And thus they that would expel sin out of their hearts, those living temples, must throw out its household stuff, and all the provision made for it, strip it, starve it, and take away all those things that are the food and fuel of lust, this is in effect to mortify it. (2.) The temple stores shall be brought in again, and the *vessels of the house of God put in their places*: but the chambers must first be sprinkled with the water of purification, and so cleansed, because they had been profaned. Thus when sin is cast out of the heart by repentance, let the blood of Christ be applied to it by faith, and then let it be furnished with the graces of God's Spirit for every good work.

10. ¶ And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*: for the Levites and the fingers that did the work, were fled every one to his field. 11. Then contended I with the rulers: and said, Why is the house of God forsaken; And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. 12. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn, and the new wine, and the oyl; unto the treasuries. 13. And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren. 14. Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.

Here is another grievance redressed by Nehemiah,

1. The Levites had been wronged. That was the grievance, their *portions had not been given them*, ver. 10. Perhaps Tobiah when he took possession of the store-chambers, seized the stores too, and, by the connivance of Eliashib, converted them to his own use. The complaint is not that they were not collected from the people, but that they were not given to the Levites, and the Levites were so modest, as not to sue for them; *For the Levites and fingers were fled every one to his field*; This comes in as a reason, either (1.) Why their payments were withheld; the Levites were non-residents; when they should have been doing their work about the temple, they were at their farms in the country, and therefore the people minded not to give them their maintenance. If ministers have not the encouragement they should have, let them consider, whether they themselves be not accessory to the contempt they are under, by the neglect of their business. Or rather (2.) It is the reason why Nehemiah soon perceived that their dues had been denied them, because he missed them from their posts. Where are the fingers? saith Nehemiah, why do not they attend according to their office to praise God? Why, truly they are gone every one to his country-seat, to get a livelihood for themselves and their families out of their grounds, for their profession would not maintain them. A scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry. The work is neglected, because the workmen are. It was not long since the payment of the salaries appointed for the fingers, was put into a very good method, chap. xii. 47; and yet how soon did it fail, for want of being looked after.

2. Nehemiah laid the fault upon the rulers, who should have taken care that the Levites minded their business, and had all due encouragement therein. This is required from christian magistrates, that they use their power to oblige ministers to do their duty, and people to do theirs. Nehemiah began with the rulers, and called them to an account, *Why is the house of God forsaken?* ver. 11. Why are the Levites starved out of it? Why did you not take notice of this and prevent it? The people *forsook the Levites*, which was expressly forbidden, *Deut. xii. 19—14. 27*. And then the Levites forsook their post in the house of God. Both ministers and people that forsake religion and the services of it, and magistrates too, who do not what they can to keep them to it, will have a great deal to answer for.

3. He delayed not to bring the dispersed Levites to *their places* again, and set them in *their stations*, as the word is, ver. 11. A Levite in his field (*clericus in foro*) is out of his station, God's house is his place, and there let him be found. Many that are careless would do much better than they do, if they were but called upon. *Say to Archippus, Take heed to thy ministry*.

4. He obliged the people to bring in their tithes, ver. 12. His zeal provoked theirs, and when they saw the Levites at their work, they could not for shame withhold their wages any longer, but honestly and cheerfully brought it in. The better church-work is done, the better will church-dues be paid.

5. He provided that just and prompt payment should be made of the Levites' stipends: commissioners were appointed to see to this, ver. 13. and they were such as were accounted faithful, i. e.

had approved themselves so in other trusts committed to them, and so had *purchased to themselves this good decree*, 1. Tim. iii. 13. Let men be tried first and then trusted; tried in the less, and then trusted with more. Their office was to receive and pay, to distribute to their brethren in due season, and due proportions.

6. Having no recompence, (it is a question whether he had thanks) from those to whom he did these good turns, he looks up to God as his pay-master, ver. 14. *Remember me, O my God, concerning this*. Nehemiah was a man much in pious ejaculations, on every occasion he looked up to God, and committed himself and his affairs to him. (1.) He here reflects with comfort and much satisfaction upon what he had done for the house of God and the offices thereof; it pleased him to think that he had been any way instrumental to revive and support religion in his country, and to reform what was amiss. What kindness any shew to God's ministers, thus shall it be returned into their own bosoms; in the secret joy they shall have there, not only in having done well, but in having done good, good to many, good to souls. (2.) He here refers himself to God to consider him for it, not in pride or as boasting of what he had done, much less depending upon it as his righteousness, or as if he thought he had made God a debtor to him, but in a humble appeal to him concerning his integrity and honest intention in what he had done; and a believing expectation that he would not be unrighteous to *forget his work and labour of love*, Heb. vi. 10. Observe how modest he is in his requests; he only prays, *remember me*, not reward me; *wipe not out my good deeds*, not publish them, record them. Yet he was rewarded, and his good deeds recorded, for God doth more than we are able to ask. Note, Deeds done *for the house of God and the offices of it*, for the support of religion, and the encouragement of it are good deeds, there is both righteousness and godliness in them, and God will certainly remember them, and not wipe them out; they shall in no wise lose their reward.

15. ¶ In those days saw I in Judah *some* treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath-day: and I testified *against them* in the day wherein they sold victuals. 16. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. 17. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? 18. Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the sabbath. 19. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gate should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and *some* of my servants set I at the gates, *that* there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath-day. 20. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware, lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. 21. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do *so* again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. 22. And I commanded the Levites, that they should cleanse themselves, and *that* they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath-day, Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

Here is another instance of that blessed reformation Nehemiah was active in; he revived sabbath-sanctification, and maintained the authority of the fourth commandment; and a very good deed this was for the house of God and the offices thereof; for where holy time is over-looked and made nothing of, it is not strange if all holy duties be neglected. Here is,

1. A remonstrance of the abuse. The law of the sabbath was very strict, and much insisted on, and with good reason, for religion is never in the throne, while sabbaths are trodden under foot. But Nehemiah discovered even in Judah, among those to whom sabbaths were given for a sign, this law wretchedly violated. His own eyes were his informers, and magistrates that are in care to discharge their duty aright, will as much as may be *see with their own eyes*, and *accomplish a diligent search* to find out that which is evil. To his great grief it appeared, that there was a general profanation of the sabbath, that holy day, even in Jerusalem, that holy city, which was so lately dedicated to God. (1.) The husbandmen trod their wine-presses, and brought home their corn on that day, ver. 15. tho' there was an express command,



mand, that in earing-time, and in harvest-time, they should rest on the sabbaths, *Exod. xxxiv. 21.* because then they might be tempted to take a greater liberty, and to fancy that God would indulge them in it. (2.) The carriers loaded their asses with all manner of burthens, and made no scruple of it, tho' there was a particular proviso in the law for the cattle resting, *Deut. v. 14.* and that they should bear no burthen on the sabbath-day, *Jer. xvii. 21.* (3.) The hawkers, and pedlars, and petty chapmen, that were men of Tyre, that famous trading city, sold all manner of ware on the sabbath-day, *ver. 16.* and the children of Judah and Jerusalem, had so little grace as to buy of them, and so encourage them making our Father's day, a day of merchandize; contrary to the law of the fourth commandment, which forbids the doing any manner of work. No wonder there was a general decay of religion, and corruption of manners, among this people, when they forsook the sanctuary, and profaned the sabbath.

2. The reformation of it. They that are jealous for the honour of God, cannot bear to see his sabbath profaned. Observe in what method this good man proceeded in his zeal for the sabbath.

1. He testified against them which profaned it, *ver. 15.* and again, *ver. 21.* He not only expressed his own dislike of it, but endeavoured to convince them that it was a great sin, and shewed them the testimony of the word of God against it. He would not punish it, till he had laid open the evil of it.

2. He reasoned with the rulers concerning it, took the nobles of Judah to task, and contended with them, *ver. 17.* The greatest of men are not too big to be told of their faults by those whose proper office it is; nay, great men should be, as here, contended with in the first place, because of the influence they have upon others. (1.) He chargeth them with it, *ye do it.* They did not carry corn, nor sell fish, but (1.) They connived at them that did, and did not use their power to restrain them, and so made themselves guilty, as those magistrates do, who bear the sword in vain. (2.) They set an ill example in other things; if the nobles allowed themselves in sports and recreations, in idle visits and idle talk on the sabbath-day, the men of business both in city and country would profane it by their worldly employments, as more justifiable. We must be responsible for the sins which others commit by our example. (2.) He chargeth it upon them as an evil thing, for so it is, proceeding from a great contempt of God and our own souls. (3.) He reasons the case with them, *ver. 18.* and shews them that sabbath-breaking was one of the sins for which God had brought judgments upon them, and if they did not take warning, but return to the same sins again, they had reason to expect further judgments: *ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.* Thus Ezra concluded, *If we again break thy commandments, wilt not thou be angry with us till thou hast consumed us?* *Ezra ix. 14.*

3. He took care to prevent the profanation of the sabbath, as one that aimed only at reformation; if he could reform them, he would not punish them, and if he should punish them, it was but that he might reform them, this is an example to magistrates to be heirs of restraint, and prudently to use the bit and bridle, that there may be no occasion for the lash.

(1.) He ordered the gates of Jerusalem to be kept shut from the evening before the sabbath, to the morning after, and set his own servants (whose care, courage, and honesty, he could confide in) to watch them, that no burthens should be brought in on the sabbath-day, or late the night before, nor early in the morning after, lest sabbath-time should be intrenched upon, *ver. 19.* Those that came in to worship in the courts of the temple, no doubt, were admitted to pass and repass, but none that came to sell goods, they were forced to lodge without the city, *ver. 20.* where no doubt they wished the sabbath were gone, that they might sell corn.

(2.) He threatned those that came with goods to the gates, who pressed hard for entrance, telling them if they came again, he would certainly lay them by the heels, *ver. 21.* And this frightened them from coming any more. Note, If reformers will but put on resolution, more may be done towards the breaking of ill customs than they can imagine. Vice connived at, is indeed a daring thing, and will bid defiance to counsel and reproof; but it may be made a sneaking thing, and will be so, when magistrates make themselves a terror to it. *The king that sits on the throne of judgment, scatters away all evil with his eyes.*

(3.) He charged the Levites to take care about the due sanctifying of the sabbath, that they should cleanse themselves in the first place, and so give a good example to the people, and that they should some of them come and keep the gates, *ver. 22.* Because he and his servants must shortly return to court, he would leave this charge with some that might abide by it, that not only when he was present, but in his absence the sabbath might be sanctified. Then there is likely to be a reformation in this and other instances, when magistrates and ministers join their forces. The courage, zeal and prudence of Nehemiah in this matter, is here recorded for our imitation; and we have reason to think, the cure he wrought was lasting, for in our Saviour's time, we find the Jews in the other extrem, over scrupulous in the ceremonial part of sabbath-sanctification.

4. He concludes this passage with a prayer, *ver. 22.* In which observe, (1.) The petitions. *Remember me,* as the thief on the cross, *Lord, remember me,* that is enough; God's thoughts to usward are very precious, *Psal. xl. 5.* and *spare me;* so far is he from thinking that what he had done, did properly merit a reward in strict justice, that he cries earnestly to God to spare him, as Jeremiah, *chap. xv. 15. take me not away in thy long-suffering,* *chap. x. 24. correct me not in anger;* and *chap. xvii. 17. be not a terror to me.* Note, The best saints, even when they do the best actions, stand in need of sparing mercy, for *there is not a just man that doth good and sinneth not.* (2.) The plea, *according to the greatness (or multitude) of thy mercies.* Note, God's mercy is what we must depend upon, and not any merit of our own, when we appear before God.

23. ¶ In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: 24. And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews language, but according to the language of each people. 25. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for your selves. 26. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless, even him did outlandish women cause to sin. 27. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God, in marrying strange wives? 28. And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. 29. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites. 30. Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business: 31. And for the wood-offering, at times appointed, and for the first-fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

We have here one instance more of Nehemiah's pious zeal for the purifying of his countrymen, a peculiar people to God, that was the thing he aimed at, in the use of his power, not the enriching of himself.

1. See here how they had corrupted themselves by marrying strange wives. This was complained of in Ezra's time, and much done towards a reformation, *Ezra ix and x.* But when the unclean spirit is cast out, if a watchful eye be not kept upon him, he will re-enter, so he did here; tho' in Ezra's time, they that had married strange wives, were forced to put them away, which could not but occasion trouble and confusion in families, yet others would not take warning, *nitimur in vetitum.* Nehemiah, like a good governor, enquired into the state of the families of those that were under his charge, that he might reform what was amiss in them, and so heal the streams, by healing the springs.

(1.) He enquired whence they had their wives, and found that many of the Jews had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab, *ver. 23.* either because they were fond of what was far-fetched, or because they hoped by these alliances to strengthen and enrich themselves. See how God, by the prophet, reproves this, *Mal. ii. 11. Judah has dealt treacherously,* and broken covenant with God, the covenant made in Ezra's time, with reference to this very thing, he has profaned the holiness of the Lord, by marrying the daughter, that is, the worshipper, of a strange god.

(2.) He talked with the children, and found they were children of strangers, for their speech bewrayed them. The children were bred up with the mothers, and learned of them, and their nurses and servants to speak, so that they could not speak the Jews language, either not at all, or not readily, or not purely; but half in the speech of Ashdod, or Ammon, or Moab, according as the country was, which the mother was a native of. Observe, (1.) Children in their childhood learn much of their mothers. *Partus sequitur ventrem.* (2.) If either side be bad, the corrupt nature will incline the children to take after that, which is a good reason why christians should not be unequally yoked. (3.) In the education of children, great care should be taken about the government of their tongues. That they learn not the language of Ashdod, any impious or impure talk, any corrupt communication.

2. See what course Nehemiah took to purge out this corruption, when he discovered how much it had prevailed.

1. He shewed them the evil of it, and the obligation he lay under to witness against it. He did not seek an occasion against them, but this was an iniquity to be punished by the judge, and which he must by means connive at, *ver. 27. shall we hearken to*



you, who endeavour to palliate and excuse it? No, it is an evil, a great evil, it is a *transgression against our God to marry strange wives*, and we must do our utmost to put a stop to it; you beg that they may not be divorced from you, but we cannot hearken to you, for there is no other remedy to clear us from the guilt, and prevent the infection. (1.) He quotes a precept to prove that it was in it self a great sin, and makes them swear to that precept, *ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, &c.* which is taken from *Deut. vii. 3.* When we would reclaim people from sin, we must shew them the finfulness of it in the glass of the commandment. (2.) He quotes a precedent to shew the pernicious consequences of it, which made it necessary to be animadverted upon by the government, *ver. 26. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?* The falls of great and good men are therefore recorded, that we may take warning by them, to shun the temptations which they were overcome by. Solomon was famous for wisdom, there was no king like him for it, yet when he married strange wives his wisdom could not secure him from the snares, nay, it departed from him, and he did very foolishly. He was beloved of God, but that threw him out of God's favour, and went near quite to extinguish the holy fire of grace in his soul: he was king over all Israel, but that lost him ten of his twelve tribes. You plead that you can marry strange wives, and yet retain the purity of Israelites; but Solomon himself could not; even *him did outlandish women cause to sin.* Therefore let him that *thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*, when he runs upon such a precipice.

2. He shewed himself highly displeased at it, that he might awaken them to a due sense of the evil of it. He *contended with them*, *ver. 25.* they offered to justify themselves in what they did, but he shewed them how frivolous their excuses were, and argued it warmly with them. When he had silenced them, he *curst them*, i. e. he denounced the judgments of God against them, and shewed them what their sin deserved. And then picked out some of them who were more obstinate than the rest, and fit to be made examples, and *smote them*, i. e. ordered them to be beaten by the proper officers, according to the law, *Deut. xxv. 2, 3.* To which he added this further mark of infamy, he *plucked off their hair*, or cut, or shaved it off; for it may so be understood. Perhaps they had prided themselves in their hair, and therefore he took it off to deform and humble them, and put them to shame; it was in effect to stigmatize them, at least for a time. Ezra, in this case, had plucked off their hair, in holy sorrow for the sin, Nehemiah plucked off their hair, in a holy indignation at the finners. See the different tempers of wife, and good, and useful men, and the divers graces, as well divers gifts, of the same Spirit.

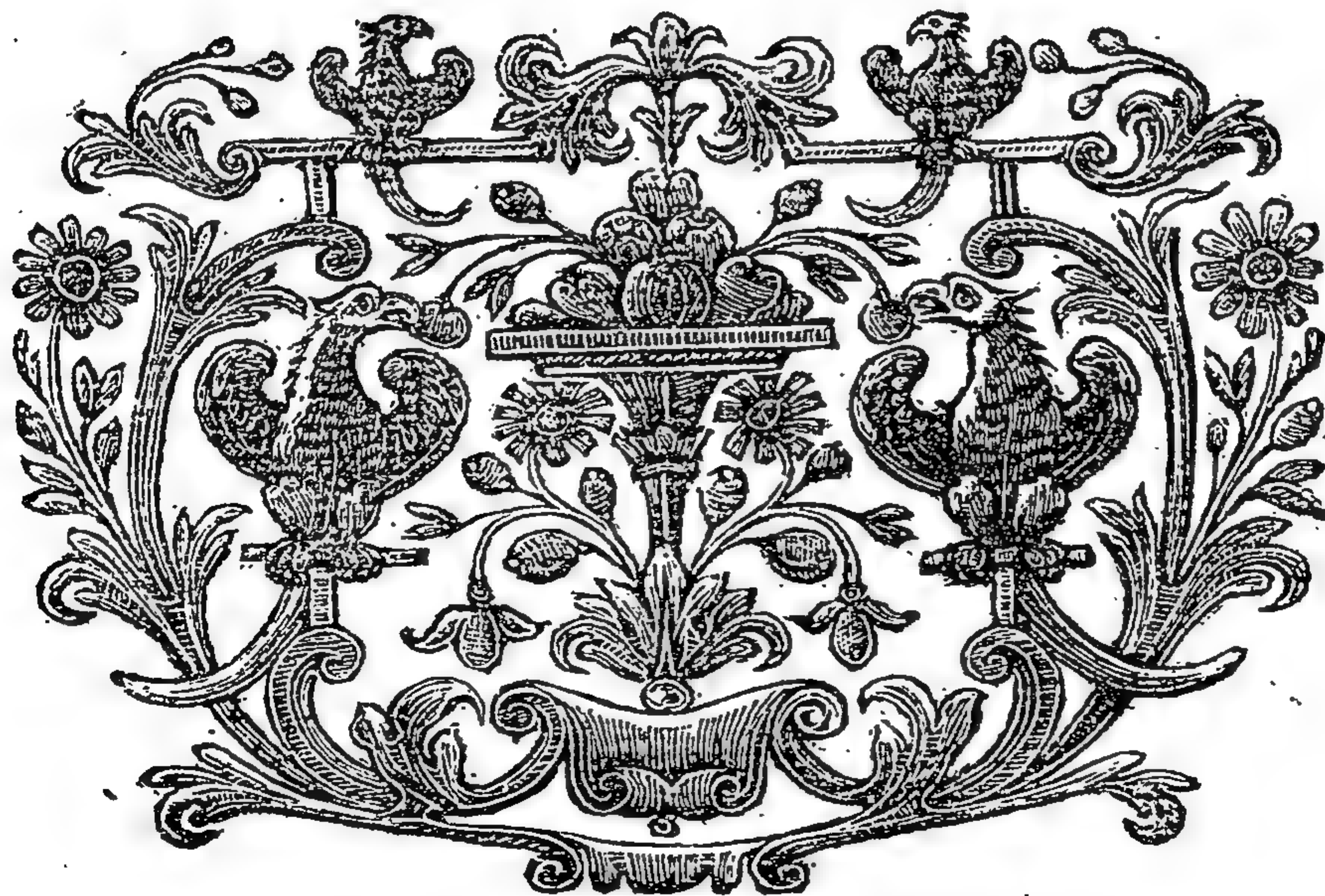
3. He obliged them not to take any more such wives, and separated those whom they had taken. He *cleansed them from all strangers*, both men and women, *ver. 30.* and made them promise with an oath, that they would never do so again, *ver. 25.* Thus did he try all ways and means to put a stop to this mischief, and to prevent another relapse into this disease.

4. He took particular care of the priests families, that they might not lie under this stain, this guilt. He found, upon enquiry, that a branch of the high-priest's own family, one of his grandsons had married a daughter of Sanballat, that notorious enemy of the Jews, (*chap. ii. 10.—iv. 1.*) and so had in effect twisted interests with the Samaritans, *ver. 28.* How little love had that man either to God or his country, who could make himself, in duty and interest, a friend to him that was a sworn enemy to both. It seems this young priest would not put away his wife, and therefore Nehemiah *chased him from him*, deprived him, degraded him, and made him for ever incapable of the priesthood. Josephus saith, this expelled priest was Manasseh, and that when Nehemiah drove him away, he went to his father-in-law Sanballat, who built him a temple upon mount Gerizim, like that at Jerusalem, and promised him he should be high-priest in it, and then was laid the foundation of the Samaritans pretensions, which continued warm to our Saviour's time, *Joh. iv. 20. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.* When Nehemiah had thus expelled one that had forfeited the honour of the priesthood, he again posted the *priests and Levites, every one in his business*, *ver. 30.* It was no loss to them to part with one that was the scandal of their coat, the work would be done better without him. When Judas was gone out, Christ said, *Now is the son of man glorified;* John xiii. 30, 31.

Lastly, Here is Nehemiah's prayers on this occasion.

1. He prays, *Remember them, O my God*, *ver. 29.* Lord, convince and convert them, put them in mind of what they should be and do, that they may come to themselves. Or, remember them to reckon with them for it; remember it against them. If we take it so, this prayer is a prophecy, that God would remember it against them. They that defile the priesthood, despise God and shall be lightly esteemed. Perhaps they were too many and too great for him to deal with; Lord (saith he) deal with them, take the work into thine own hands.

2. He prays, *Remember me, O my God*, *ver. 31.* The best services done to the publick have sometimes been forgotten by those for whom they were done, *Eccl. ix. 15.* therefore Nehemiah refers himself to God, to recompense him, takes him for his paymaster, and then doubts not but he shall be well paid. This may well be the summary of our petitions, we need no more to make us happy but this. *Remember me, O my God, for good.*





A N

# E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

## P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

Of the BOOK of

# E S T H E R.

*How the providence of God watched over the Jews, that were returned out of captivity to their own lands, and what great and kind things were done for them, we read in the two foregoing books; but there were many who staid behind, having not zeal enough for God's house, and the holy land and city, to carry them through the difficulties of a removal thither: these one would think should have been excluded the special protection of providence, as unworthy the name of Israelites: but our God deals not with us according to our folly and weakness. We find in this book, that even those Jews which were scattered in the provinces of the heathen, were taken care of, as well as those that were gathered in the land of Judea, and were wonderfully preserved, when doomed to destruction, and appointed as sheep for the slaughter. Who drew up this story, is uncertain; Mordecai was as able as any man to relate, on his own knowledge, the several passages of it, quorum pars magna fuit; and that he wrote such an account of them as was necessary to inform his people of the grounds of their observing the feast of Purim, we are told, chap. ix. 20. Mordecai wrote these things, and sent them inclosed in letters to all the Jews; and therefore we have reason to think he was the penman of the whole book. It is the narrative of a plot laid against the Jews to cut them all off, and wonderfully disappointed by a concurrence of providences: The most compendious exposition of it will be to read it deliberately all together at one sitting, for the latter events expound the former, and shew what providence intended in them. The name of God is not found in this book; but the apocryphal addition to it (which is not in the Hebrew, nor was ever received by the Jews into the canon, containing six chapters) begins thus, Then Mordecai said, God has done these things. But tho' the name of God be not in it; the finger of God is, directing many minute events for the bringing about of his peoples deliverance. The particulars are not only surprising and very entertaining, but edifying and very encouraging to the faith and hope of God's people, in the most difficult and dangerous times: we cannot now expect such miracles to be wrought for us, as were for Israel when they were brought out of Egypt, but we may expect that in such ways as God here took to defeat Haman's plot, he will still protect his people. We are told (1.) How Esther came to be queen, and Mordecai to be great at court, who were to be the instruments of the intended deliverance, chap. i. and ii. (2.) Upon what provocation, and by what arts Haman the Amalekite, obtained an order for the destruction of all the Jews, chap. iii. (3.) The great distress the Jews and their patriots especially were in thereupon, chap. iv. (4.) The defeating of Haman's particular plot against Mordecai's life, chap. v, vi, and vii. (5.) The defeating of his general plot against the Jews, chap. viii. (6.) The care that was taken to perpetuate the remembrance of this, chap. ix, and x. The whole story confirms the Psalmist's observation, Psal. xxxvii. 12, 13. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him, he sees that his day is coming.*

### C H A P. I.

*Several things in this chapter it self are very instructive and of use; but the design of recording the story of it is to shew how way was made for Esther to the crown, in order to her being instrumental to defeat Haman's plot, and this, long before the plot was laid, that we may observe and admire the foresight and vast reaches of providence. Known unto God are all his works before hand. (1.) Ahasuerus the king in his height, feasts all his great men, ver. 1—9. (2.) In his heat he divorceth his queen, because she would not come to him when he sent for her, ver. 10—22. And this shews how God serves his own purposes, even by the sins and follies of men, which he would not permit, if he knew not how to bring good out of them.*

1. **N**OW it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces) 2. That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, 3. In the third year of his reign he made a feast unto all his princes, and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces being before him. 4. When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, many days, even an hundred and fourscore days. 5. And when



when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people *that were* present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the kings palace, 6. *Where were* white, green, and blue hangings, fastned with cords of fine linen, and purple, to silver rings, and pillars of marble: the beds *were* of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble. 7. And they gave *them* drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. 8. And the drinking *was* according to the law: none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every mans pleasure. 9. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women *in* the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.

Which of the kings of Persia this Ahasuerus was, the learned are not agreed; Mordecai is said to have been one of those that were *carried* captive from Jerusalem, chap. ii. 6. and by that it should seem it was one of the first kings of that empire, Dr Lightfoot thinks it was that Artaxerxes who hindered the building of the temple, who is called also Ahasuerus, *Ezra* iv. 6, 7. after his great-grandfather of the Medes, *Dan.* ix. 1. We have here an account,

1. Of the vast extent of his dominion. In the time of Darius and Cyrus, there were but one hundred and twenty provinces, *Dan.* vi. 1. Now there were one hundred twenty seven; *from India to Ethiopia*, ver. 1. An over-grown kingdom; which in time would sink with its own weight; and, as usual, would lose its provinces as fast as it got them. If such vast power be put into a bad hand, it is able to do so much the more mischief, but if into a good hand, it is not able to do so much the more good. Christ's kingdom is, or shall be, far larger than this, when the kingdoms of the world shall all become his, and it shall be everlasting.

2. Of the great pomp and magnificence of his court. When he found himself fixed and warmed in his throne, the pride of his heart rising with the grandeur of his kingdom, he made a most extravagant feast, wherein he put himself to a vast expence and trouble, only to shew the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, ver. 4. This was vain-glory, an affectation of pomp to no purpose at all; for none questioned the riches of his kingdom, nor offered to vye with him for honour. If he had shewed the riches of his kingdom, and the honour of his majesty, as some of his successors did, in contributing largely towards the building of the temple, and the maintaining of the temple-service; (*Ezra* vi. 8.—vii. 22.) it would have turned to a much better account. Two feasts Ahasuerus made. (1.) One for his nobles and princes, which lasted one hundred and eighty days, ver. 3, 4. Not that he feasted the same persons every day for all that time, but perhaps the nobles and princes of one province one day, of another province another day, while thus he and his constant attendants fared sumptuously every day. The Chaldee paraphrast (who is very bold in his additions to the story of this book) saith, there had been a rebellion among his subjects, and this feast was kept for joy of the quashing of it. (2.) Another was made for all the people, both great and small, which lasted seven days; some one day, and some another; and because no house would hold them, they were entertained *in the court of the garden*, ver. 5. The hangings with which the several apartments were divided, or the tents which were there pitched for the company, were very fine and rich, so were the beds or benches on which they sat, and the pavement under their feet, ver. 6. Better is a dinner of herbs with quietness, and the enjoyment of one's self and a friend, than this banquet of wine, with all the noise and tumult that must needs attend it.

3. Of the good order which in some respects was kept there notwithstanding. We do not find this like Belshazzar's feast, in which dunghil-gods were praised, and the vessels of the sanctuary profaned, *Dan.* v. 3, 4. Yet the Chaldee paraphrase saith, the vessels of the sanctuary were used in this feast, to the great grief of the pious Jews. It was not like Herod's feast, which reserved a prophet's head for the last dish.

But two things more we may gather from the account here given of this feast, which are laudable.

1. That there was no forcing of healths, nor urging them. That drinking was according to the law, probably some law lately made, none did compel, no not by a continual proposing it (as Josephus explains it) they did not send the glass about, but every man drank as he pleased, ver. 8. so that if there were any that drank to excess, it was their own fault, but few would when the king's order put an honour upon sobriety. This caution of a heathen prince, even then when he would shew his generosity, may shame many who are called christians, that think they do not sufficiently shew their good housekeeping, nor bid their friends welcome, unless they make them drunk, and under pretence of sending the health round, send the sin round, and death with it. There is a wo to them

that do so; let them read it and tremble, *Hab.* ii. 15, 16. It is robbing men of their reason, their richest jewel, and making them fools, the greatest wrong that can be.

2. That there was no mixed dancing, for the gentlemen and ladies were entertained asunder, not as in Belshazzar's feast, whose wives and concubines drank with him, *Dan.* v. 2. or Herod's, whose daughter danced before him. Vashti feasted the women in her own apartment; not openly in the court of the garden, but in the royal house, ver. 9. Thus while the king shewed the honour of his majesty, she and her ladies shewed the honour of their modesty, which is truly the majesty of the fair sex.

10. ¶ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, 11. To bring Vashti the queen before the king, with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on: 12. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the kings commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth; and his anger burned in him. 13. ¶ Then the king said to the wisemen, which knew the times, (for so was the kings manner towards all that knew law and judgment: 14. And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the kings face, and which sat the first in the kingdom) 15. What shall we do unto the queen Vashti, according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus, by the chamberlains? 16. And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. 17. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women; so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes; when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. 18. Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the kings princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. 19. If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. 20. And when the kings decree which he shall make, shall be published throughout all his empire (for it is great) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small. 21. And the saying pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan: 22. For he sent letters into all the kings provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.

We have here a damp to all the mirth of Ahasuerus's feast, it ended in heaviness, not as Job's childrens feast by a wind from the wilderness, not as Belshazzar's by a hand-writing on the wall; but by his own folly. An unhappy falling out there was at the end of the feast, between the king and queen, which broke off the solemnity abruptly, and sent the guests away silent and ashamed.

1. It was certainly the king's weakness to send for Vashti into his presence, when he was drunk, and in company with abundance of gentlemen, many of them, it is likely, in the same condition. When his heart was merry with wine, nothing would serve him, but Vashti must come well dressed as she was, with the crown on her head, that the princes and people might see what a pretty woman she was, ver. 10, 11. Hereby (1.) He dishonoured himself as a husband, who ought to protect, but by no means to expose, the modesty of his wife; to be to her a covering of the eyes, (*Gen.* xx. 16.) not to uncover them. (2.) He diminished himself as a king, in commanding that from his wife, which she might refuse, much to the honour of her virtue. It was against the custom of the Persians for the women to appear in publick, and he put a great hardship upon her, when he did not court but command her to do so uncouth a thing, and make her a shew. If he had not been



put out of the possession of himself by drinking to excess, he would not have done such a thing, but have been angry at any one that should have mentioned it. When the wine is in, the wit is out, and mens reason departs from them.

2. However, perhaps it was not her wisdom to deny him, *ver. 12. she refused to come*, tho' he sent his command by seven honourable messengers, and publickly, and Josephus saith, sent again and again, yet she persisted in her denial. Had she come, while it was evident she did it in pure obedience, it would have been no reflection upon her modesty, nor of ill example. The thing was not in it self sinful, and therefore to obey had been more her honour than to be so precise. Perhaps she refused in a haughty manner, and then it was certainly evil; she scorned to come at the king's commandment. What a balk was this to him! while he was shewing the glory of his kingdom, he shewed the reproach of his family, that he had a wife that would do as she pleased. Strifes between yoke-fellows are bad enough at any time, but before company they are very scandalous, and occasion blushing and uneasiness.

3. The king hereupon grew outrageous. He that had rule over one hundred twenty-seven provinces, had no rule over his own spirit, but his anger burned in him, *ver. 12.* He had consulted his own comfort and credit more, if he had stifled his resentments, had passed by the affront his wife gave him, and turned it off with a jest.

4. Tho' he was very angry, he would not do any thing in this matter, till he advised with his privy-counsellors; as he had seven chamberlains to execute his orders, who are named, *ver. 10.* so he had seven counsellors to direct his orders. The greater power a man hath, the greater need he has of advice, that he may not abuse his power. Of these counsellors it is said, that they were learned men, for they *knew law and judgment*; that they were wise men, for they *knew the times*; and that the king put great confidence in them, and honour upon them, for they *saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom*, *ver. 13, 14.* In multitude of such counsellors there is safety. Now here is,

1. The question proposed to this cabinet-council, *ver. 15. What shall we do to the queen Vashti, according to law?* Observe (1.) Tho' it was the queen that was guilty, the law must have its course. (2.) Tho' the king was very angry, yet he would do nothing but what he was advised was according to law.

2. The proposal which Memucan made, that Vashti should be divorced for her disobedience. Some suggest that he gave this severe advice, and the rest agreed to it, because they knew it would please the king, would gratify both his passion now, and his appetite afterwards. But Josephus saith, that, on the contrary, he had a mighty affection for Vashti, and would not have put her away for this offence, if he could legally have passed it by. And then we must suppose Memucan, in his advice, to have a sincere regard to justice and the publick good.

(1.) He shews what would be the ill consequences of the queen's disobedience to her husband if it were passed by, and not animadverted upon, that it would embolden other wives both to disobey their husbands, and to domineer over them. Had this unhappy falling out between the king and his wife, wherein she was conqueror, been private, the error had remained with themselves, and the quarrel might have been made away privately between themselves, but it happening to be publick, and perhaps the ladies that were now feasting with the queen, having shewed themselves pleased with her refusal, her bad example would be likely to have had a bad influence upon all the families of the kingdom; if the queen must have her humour, and the king must submit to it, (since the houses of private persons commonly take their measures from the courts of princes) the wives would be haughty and imperious, and would scorn to obey their husbands, and the poor despised husbands might fret at it, but could not help themselves, for the *contentions of a wife are a continual dropping*, Prov. xix. 13.—xxvii. 15. and see Prov. xxi. 9.—xxv. 24. When wives *despise their husbands*, whom they ought to reverence, Eph. v. 33. and contend for dominion over those to whom they ought to be in subjection, 1 Pet. iii. 1. there cannot but be continual guilt and grief, confusion and every evil work. And great ones must take heed of setting copies of this kind, *ver. 16, 17, 18.*

(2.) He shews what would be the good consequence of a decree against Vashti, that she should be divorced. We may suppose before they proceeded to this extremity, they sent to Vashti to know if she would yet submit, cry *peccavi*, and ask the king's pardon, which if she had done, the mischief of her example would have been effectually prevented, and process should have been staid; but it is likely she continued obstinate, and insisted upon it as her prerogative to do as she pleased, whether it pleased the king or no; and therefore they gave this judgment against her, that *she come no more before the king*, and this judgment so ratified, as never to be reversed, *ver. 19.* The consequence of this it was hoped would be, that the *wives would give to their husbands honour*, even the wives of the great, notwithstanding their own greatness, and the wives of the small, notwithstanding the husband's meanness, *ver. 20.* And thus every man would bear rule in his own house, as he ought to do, and the wives being subject, the children and servants would be so too. It is the interest of states and kingdoms, to provide that good order be kept in private families.

3. The edict that passed according to this proposal, signifying that the queen was divorced for contumacy according to the law, and that if other wives were in like manner undutiful to their husbands, they must expect to be in like manner disgraced, *ver. 21, 22.* were they better than the queen? Whether it was the passion or the policy of the king that was served by this edict, God's providence served its own purpose by it, which was to make way for Esther to the crown.

## C H A P. II.

Two things are here recorded in this chapter, which were working towards the deliverance of the Jews from Haman's conspiracy, (1.) The advance of Esther to be queen instead of Vashti. Many others were candidates for the honour, *ver. 1—4.* But Esther, an orphan, a captive Jew, *ver. 5—7.* recommended her self to the king's chamberlain first, *ver. 8—11.* and then to the king, *ver. 12—17.* who made her queen, *ver. 18—20.* (2.) The good service that Mordecai did to the king, in discovering a plot against his life, *ver. 21—23.*

1. **A**FTER these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her. 2. Then said the king's servants, that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king. 3. And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hegai the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women, and let their things for purification be given them: 4. And let the maiden which pleaseth the king, be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king, and he did so. 5. ¶ Now in Shushan the palace, there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite: 6. Who had been carried away from Jerusalem, with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. 7. And he brought up Hadassah (that is Esther) his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful, whom Mordecai (when her father and mother were dead) took for his own daughter. 8. ¶ So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai keeper of the women. 9. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him, and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens which were meet to be given her out of the king's house, and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. 10. Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it. 11. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her. 12. ¶ Now when every maid's turn was come, to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oyl of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women) 13. Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her, to go with her out of the house of the women, unto the king's house. 14. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name. 15. ¶ Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai (who had taken her for his daughter) was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing, but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women appointed: and Esther obtained



obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her: 16. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus, into his house royal, in the tenth month (which is the month Tebeth) in the seventh year of his reign. 17. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, *even* Esthers feast, and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts according to the state of the king. 19. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the kings gate. 20. Esther had not yet shewed her kindred, nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

How God put down one that was high and mighty from her seat, we read in the chapter before, and are now to be told how he exalted one of low degree, as the virgin Mary observes in her song, *Luke i. 52.* and *Hannah* before her, *1 Sam. ii. 4—8.* Vashti being humbled for her height, Esther is advanced for her humility. Observe,

1. The extravagant course that was taken to please the king with another wife instead of Vashti. Josephus saith, when his anger was over, he was exceedingly grieved that the matter was carried so far, and would have been reconciled to Vashti, but that, by the constitution of the government, the judgment was irrevocable; therefore to make him forget her, they contrived how to entertain him first with a great variety of concubines, and then to fix him to the most agreeable of them all for a wife instead of Vashti. The marriages of princes are commonly made by policy and interest, for the enlarging of their dominions, and the strengthening of their alliances; but this must be made partly by the agreeableness of the person to the king's fancy, whether she were rich or poor, noble or ignoble. What ado was made here to humour the king: as if his power and wealth were given him for no other end, but that he might have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable and exquisitely refined, tho' at the best they are but dross and dregs in comparison with divine and spiritual pleasures. (1.) All the provinces of his kingdom must be searched for fair young virgins, and officers appointed to choose them, *ver. 3.* (2.) A house (a seraglio) was prepared on purpose for them, and a person appointed to have the charge of them, to see that they were well provided for. (3.) No less than twelve months was allowed them for their purification, some of them at least, who were brought out of the country, that they might be very clean, and perfumed, *ver. 12.* Even those who were the master-pieces of nature, must yet have all this help from art, to recommend them to a vain and carnal mind. (4.) After the king had once taken them to his bed, they were made recluses ever after, except the king pleased at any time to send for them, *ver. 14.* they were looked upon as secondary wives, were maintained by the king accordingly, and might not marry. We may see by this instance, to what absurd practices those came, who were destitute of divine revelation, and to punish them for their idolatry, were given up to vile affections; having broke through that law of creation which resulted from God's making man, they broke through another law, which was founded upon his making one man and one woman. And see what need there was of the gospel of Christ to purify men from the lusts of the flesh, and to reduce them to their original institution. Those that have *learned Christ*, will think it a *shame* even to *speake of such things* as these which were done of them, not only in *secret* but avowedly, *Eph. v. 2.*

2. The over-ruling providence of God bringing Esther to be queen by this means. Had she been first recommended to Ahasuerus for a wife, he would have rejected the motion with disdain. But when she comes in her turn after several others, and it was found, that tho' many of them were ingenious and discreet, graceful and agreeable, yet Esther excelled them all. Thus way was made for her, even by her rivals, into the king's affections, and the honours consequent thereupon. And, as bishop Patrick saith, those who suggest that she committed a great sin to come at this dignity, do not consider the custom of those times and countries. Every one that the king took to his bed, was married to him, and was his wife of a lower rank, as Hagar was Abraham's, so that if Esther had not been made queen, the sons of Jacob need not say, that he *dealt with their sister as with a harlot*. Concerning Esther; we must observe,

1. Her original and character. (1.) She was one of the *children of the captivity*; a Jewess, and a sharer with her people in their bondage. Daniel and his fellows were advanced in the land where they were captives; for they were of those whom God sent thither for their good, *Jer. xxiv. 5.* (2.) She was an orphan; her father and mother were both dead, *ver. 7.* but when they had forsaken her, then the Lord took her up, *Psal. xxvii. 10.* When

those whose unhappiness it is to be thus deprived of their parents in their childhood, yet afterwards come to be eminently pious and prosperous, we ought to take notice of it to the glory of that God, and his grace and providence, who has taken it among the titles of his honour, to be a *father of the fatherless*. (3.) She was a beauty, *fair of form, good of countenance*, so it is in the margin, *ver. 7.* Her wisdom and virtue were her greatest beauty, but it is an advantage to a diamond to be well set. (4.) Mordecai her cousin-german was her guardian, *brought her up, and took her for his own daughter*. The LXX say, he designed to make her his wife; if that were so, he was to be praised that he opposed not her better preferment. (5.) Let God be acknowledged in raising up friends for the fatherless and motherless; let it be an encouragement to that pious instance of charity, that there have been many who have taken care of the education of orphans, that have lived to see the good fruit of their care and pains abundantly to their comfort. Dr Lightfoot thinks this Mordecai is the same with that mentioned, *Ezra ii. 2.* who went up to Jerusalem with the first, and helped forward the settlement of his people, till the building of the temple was stopped, and then went back to the Persian court to see what service he could do them there.

Mordecai being Esther's guardian or pro-parent, we are told (1.) How tender he was of her, as if she had been his own child, *ver. 11.* he walked before her door every day, to know how she did, and what interest she had. Let those whose relations are thus cast upon them by the divine providence, be thus kindly affectioned to them, and solicitous for them. (2.) How respectful she was to him, tho' in relation she was his equal, yet in age and dependence being his inferior, she honoured him as her father, *did his commandment*, *ver. 20.* This is an example to orphans; if they fall into the hands of those who love them and take care of them, let them make suitable returns of duty and observance. The Jews obliged their guardians were in duty to provide for them, the more obliged they are in gratitude to honour and obey their guardians. Here is an instance of Esther's obsequiousness to Mordecai, that she did not *shew her people or her kindred*, because Mordecai had charged her that she should not, *ver. 10.* He did not bid her deny her country, nor tell a lie to conceal her parentage; if he had, she must not have done it: But he bid her not proclaim it; all truths are not to be spoken at all times, tho' an untruth is not to be spoken at any time. She being born in Shushan, and her parents being dead, all took her to be of Persian extraction, and she was not bound to undeceive them.

2. Her preferment; Who would have thought that a Jew, a captive, an orphan, was born to be a queen, an empress! So it proved: Providence sometimes *raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes*, *1 Sam. ii. 8.* (1.) The king's chamberlain honoured her, *ver. 9.* and was ready to serve her; wisdom and virtue will gain respect. They that make sure God's favour, shall find favour with man too, as far as it is good for them. Ail that looked upon Esther admired her, *ver. 15.* and concluded she was the lady that would win the prize: And so she did: (2.) The king himself fell in love with her. She was not solicitous as the rest of the maidens were to set herself off with artificial beauty, she *required nothing* but just what was appointed her, *ver. 15.* And yet she was most acceptable. Beauty the more natural, the more agreeable. The king loved Esther above *all the women*, *ver. 17.* Now he needed not make any further trials, or take time to deliberate, he is soon determined to *set the royal crown upon her head, and make her queen*, *ver. 17.* This was done in his seventh year, *ver. 16.* Vashti was divorced in his third year, *chap. i. 3.* So that he was four years without a queen.

Notice is taken, (1.) Of the honours the king put upon Esther. He graced the solemnity of her coronation with a *royal feast*, *ver. 18.* at which perhaps, Esther, in compliance with the king, made a publick appearance, which Vashti had refused to do, that she might have the praise of obedience in the same instance, in which the other incurred the blot of disobedience. He also granted a *release to the provinces*, either a remittance of the taxes in arrear, or an act of grace for criminals; as Pilate at the feast released a prisoner. This was to add to the joy. (2.) Of the deference Esther continued to pay to her quondam guardian; she still *did the commandment of Mordecai*, as when she was brought up with him, *ver. 20.* Mordecai sat *in the king's gate*, that was the top of his preferment, he was one of the porters or door-keepers of the court; whether he had this place before, or Esther obtained it for him, we are not told, but there he sat contentedly, and aimed no higher; and yet Esther who was advanced to the throne, was observant of him. This was an evidence of a humble and grateful disposition; that she had a sense of his former kindnesses, and his continued wisdom; it is a great ornament to those that are advanced, and much their praise to remember their benefactors, to retain the impressions of their good education, to be diffident of themselves, willing to take advice, and thankful for it.

21. ¶ In those days (while Mordecai sat in the kings gate) two of the kings chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus: 22. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto



Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name. 23. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out: therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

This good service which Mordecai did to the government, in discovering a plot against the life of the king is here recorded, because the mention of it will again occur to his advantage. No step it yet taken towards Haman's design of the Jews destruction, but several steps are taken towards God's design of their deliverance; and this for one; God now gives Mordecai an opportunity of doing the king a good turn, that he might have the fairer opportunity afterward of doing the Jews a good turn.

1. A design was laid against the king by two of his own servants, who sought to lay hand on him, not only to make him a prisoner, but to take away his life, *ver. 21.* Probably they resented some affront they thought he had given them, or some injury he had done them; who would be great, to be so much the object of envy? Who would be arbitrary, to be so much the object of ill-will? Princes, above any mortals, have their souls continually in their hands, and oft go down *slain to the pit*, especially those who caused their terror in the land of the living.

2. Mordecai got notice of their treason, and by Esther's means discovered it to the king, hereby confirming her in, and recommending himself to, the king's favour. How he came to the knowledge of it doth not appear, whether he over-heard their discourse, or they offered to draw him in with them, so it was that *the thing was known* to him; which ought to be a warning against all traitorous and seditious practices, tho' they presume upon secrecy, *a bird of the air shall carry the voice.* And Mordecai, as soon as he knew it, got notice of it to the king, which ought to be an instruction and example to all that would be found good subjects, not to conceal any ill design they know of against the prince or the publick peace, for it is laying a confederacy with publick enemies.

3. The traitors were hanged, as they deserved, but not till it was upon search fully proved upon them, *ver. 23.* and the whole matter was recorded in the king's journals, with a particular remark that Mordecai was the man who discovered the treason. He was not rewarded presently, but a book of remembrance was written. Thus they who serve Christ, tho' their recompence is adjourned till the resurrection of the just, yet an account is kept of their *work of faith and labour of love*, which God is not unrighteous to forget, Heb. vi. 10.

### C H A P. III.

*A very black and mournful scene here opens, and which threatens the ruin of all the people of God: Were there not some such dark nights, the light of the morning would not be so welcome.* (1.) Haman is made the king's favourite, *ver. 1.* (2.) Mordecai refuseth to give him the honour he demanded, *ver. 2—4.* (3.) Haman for his sake vows to be revenged upon all the Jews, *ver. 5, 6.* (4.) He upon a malicious suggestion obtains an order from the king, to have them all massacred upon a certain day, *ver. 7—13.* (5.) This order is dispersed through the kingdom, *ver. 14, 15.*

1. **A**FTER these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. 2. And all the king's servants that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him: but Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. 3. Then the king's servants which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, why transgressest thou the king's commandment? 4. Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai his matters would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew. 5. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. 6. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

Here we have,

1. Haman advanced by the prince, and adored thereupon by the people; he had lately laid Esther in his bosom, but she had no such interest in him, as to get her friends preferred, or to prevent the preferring of one that she knew was an enemy to her people. When those that are good become great, yet they find

they cannot do good, nor prevent mischief as they would. This Haman was an Agagite, an Amalekite, saith Josephus; probably of the descendants of Agag, a common name of the princes of Amalek, as appears, *Numb. xxiv. 7.* and some think he was by birth a prince as Jehoiakim was, whose seat was set above the rest of captive kings, *2 Kings xxv. 28.* as Haman's here was, *ver. 1.* The king took a fancy to him; (princes are not bound to give reasons for their favours) made him his favourite, his confident, his prime minister of state. And such a commanding influence the court then had, that (contrary to the proverb) whom it blessed, the country blessed too; for all men adored this rising sun, and the king's servants were particularly commanded to bow before him, and to do him reverence, *ver. 2.* and they did so. I wonder what the king saw in Haman, that was commending or meritorious, it is plain, he was not a man of honour or justice, of any true courage, or steady conduct, but proud and passionate, and revengeful, yet promoted, and caressed, and who but he? Princes darlings are not always worthies.

2. Mordecai adhering to his principles with a bold and daring resolution, and therefore refusing to reverence Haman, as the rest of the king's servants did, *ver. 2.* He was urged to it by his friends, who minded him of the king's commandment, and consequently of the danger he run upon; if he refused to comply with it, it was as much as his neck was worth, especially considering Haman's insolence, *ver. 3.* They spake daily to him, to persuade him to conform, but all in vain, he hearkened not to them, but told them plainly that he was a Jew, and could not in conscience do it; doubtless his refusal, when it came to be taken notice of, and made the subject of discourse, was commonly attributed to pride and envy, that he would not pay respect to Haman, because on the score of his alliance to Esther, he was not himself as much promoted; or to a factious seditious spirit, and a disaffection to the king and his government; and those that would make the best of it looked upon it as his weakness, or his want of breeding, called it a humour and a piece of affected singularity; it doth not appear that any body else scrupled it but Mordecai only; and yet his refusal was pious, conscientious, and pleasing to God, for the religion of a Jew forbade him, (1.) To give such extravagant honours as were required to any mortal man, especially so wicked a man as Haman was. In the apocryphal chapters of this book, *chap. xiii. 12, 13, 14.* Mordecai is brought in thus appealing to God in this matter; *Thou knowest, Lord, that it was neither in contempt nor pride, nor for any desire of glory, that I did not bow down to proud Haman, for I could have been content with good will for the salvation of Israel, to kiss the soles of his feet, but I did this, that I might not prefer the glory of man, above the glory of God, neither will I worship any but thee.* (2.) He especially thought it a piece of injustice to his nation, to give such honour to an Amalekite, one of that devoted nation, with whom God had sworn he would have perpetual war, *Exod. xvii. 16.* and concerning which he had given that solemn charge, *Deut. xxv. 17.* Remember what Amalek did. Tho' religion doth by no means destroy good manners, but teaches us to render honour to whom honour is due, yet it is the character of a citizen of Sion, that not only in his heart but in his eyes such a vile person as Haman was is contemned, *Psal. xv. 4.* And let those who are governed by principles of conscience, be steady and resolute however censured or threatened, as Mordecai was.

3. Haman meditating revenge. Some that hoped thereby to curry favour with Haman, took notice to him of Mordecai's rudeness, waiting to see whether he would bend or break, *ver. 4.* Haman then observed it himself, and was full of wrath, *ver. 5.* A meek and humble man would have slighted the affront, and have said, let him have his humour, what am I the worse for it? but it makes Haman's proud spirit rage and fret, and boil within him, so that he becomes uneasy to himself and all about him. It is soon resolved that Mordecai must die. The head must off that will not bow to Haman; if he cannot have his honours, he will have his blood. It is as penal in this court not to worship Haman, as it was in Nebuchadnezzar's, not to worship the golden image which he had set up. Mordecai is a person of quality, in a post of honour, and own cousin to the queen, and yet Haman thinks his life nothing towards a satisfaction for the affront, thousands of innocent and valuable lives must be sacrificed to his indignation; and therefore he vows the destruction of all the people of Mordecai, for his sake, because his being a Jew, was the reason he gave why he did not reverence Haman. Herein appears Haman's intolerable pride, insatiable cruelty, and the antient antipathy of an Amalekite to the Israel of God. Saul the son of Kish a Benjamite spared Agag, but Mordecai the son of Kish a Benjamite, (*chap. ii. 5.*) shall find no mercy with this Agagite, whose design is to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, *ver. 6.* which I suppose would include those that were returned to their own land, for that was now a province of his kingdom. Come and let us cut them off from being a nation, *Psal. lxxxiii. 4.* Nero's barbarous wish is his, that they had all but one neck.

7. ¶ In the first month (that is the month Nisan) in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot before Haman, from day to day, and from



from month to month, *to the twelfth month, that is the month Adar.* 8. ¶ And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws *are* diverse from all people, neither keep they the kings laws : therefore it is not for the kings profit to suffer them. 9. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed : and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring *it* into the kings treasuries. 10. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews enemy. 11. And the king said unto Haman. The silver *is* given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. 12. Then were the kings scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the kings lieutenants, and to the governours that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province, according to the writing thereof, and *to* every people after their language ; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the kings ring. 13. And the letters were sent by posts into all the kings provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, *even* upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, (which is the month Adar) and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey. 14. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province, was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. 15. The posts went out, being hastened by the kings commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace : and the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed.

Haman values himself upon that bold and daring thought, which he fancied well became his great spirit, of destroying all the Jews : an undertaking worthy of its author, and which he promised himself would perpetuate his memory. He doubts not, but to find desperate and bloody hands enough to cut all their throats, if the king will but give him leave : how he obtained leave, and commission to do it we are here told. He had the king's ear, let him alone to manage him.

1. He makes a false and malicious representation of the Jews, and their character to the king, *ver. 8.* The enemies of God's people, could not give them such ill treatment as they do, if they did not first put them into an ill name. He would have the king believe, (1.) That the Jews were a despicable people, and it was not for his credit to harbour them. *A certain people there is, without name, as if no body knew whence they came, and what they were, they are not incorporated, but scattered abroad and dispersed in all the provinces, as fugitives and vagabonds on the earth, and inmates in all countries, the burthen and scandal of the places where they live.* (2.) That they were a dangerous people, and it was not safe to harbour them. They have laws and usages of their own, and conform not to the statutes of the kingdom, and the customs of the country ; and therefore might be looked upon as disaffected to the government, and likely to infect others with their singularities, which may end in a rebellion. It is no new thing for the best of men, to have such invidious characters as these given of them ; if it be no sin to kill them, it is no sin to belie them.

2. He bids high for leave to *destroy them all*, *ver. 9.* He knew there were many that hated the Jews, and would willingly fall upon them, if they might but have a commission, *let it be written therefore, that they may be destroyed,* give but orders for a general massacre of all the Jews, and Haman will undertake it shall be easily done ; if the king will gratify him in this matter, he will make him a present of *ten thousand talents*, which shall be paid into the king's treasuries. This he thought would be a powerful inducement to the king to consent, and would obviate the strongest objection against him, which was that the government must needs sustain loss in its revenues, by the destruction of so many of its subjects : so great a sum he hoped would be equivalent for that. Proud and malicious men will not stick at the expences of their revenge, nor spare any cost to gratify it ; yet, no doubt, Haman knew how to re-imburse himself out of the spoil of the Jews, which his janizaries were to seize for him, *ver. 13.* and so to make them bear the charges of their own ruin ; while he himself hoped to be not only a savor, but a gainer by the bargain.

3. He obtains what he desired, a full commission to do what he would with the Jews, *ver. 10, 11.* The king was so mindless of business, and so bewitched with Haman, that he took no time to examine the truth of his allegations, but was as willing as

Haman could wish, to believe the worst concerning the Jews, and therefore gives them up into his hands, as lambs to the lion, *the people are thine, do with them as it seemeth good unto thee ;* he doth not say, kill them, slay them, hoping Haman's own cooler thoughts would abate the rigour of that sentence ; and sell them for slaves, but do what thou wilt with them. And so little consideration he had how much he should lose in his tribute ; and how much Haman would gain in the spoil, that he gave him withal the ten thousand talents, *the silver is thine.* Such an implicit confidence likewise he had in Haman, and so perfectly had he abandoned all care of his kingdom, that he gave Haman his ring, his privy-seal, or sign-manual, wherewith to confirm whatever edict he pleased to draw up to this purpose. Miserable is the kingdom that is at the dispose of such a head as this, which has one ear only, and a nose to be led by, but neither eyes nor brains, nor scarce a tongue of its own.

4. He then consults with his sooth-sayers, to find out a lucky day for the designed massacre, *ver. 7.* The resolve was taken up in the first month, in the twelfth year of the king, when Esther had been his wife about five years ; some day or other in that year must be pitched upon ; as if he doubted not, but that heaven would favour his design, and further it, he refers it to the lot, *i. e.* to the divine providence, to choose the day for him, but that in the decision proved a better friend to the Jews than to him ; for the lot fell upon the twelfth month, so that Mordecai and Esther had eleven months to turn them in, for the defeating of the design, or if they could not, space would be left for the Jews to make their escape, and shift for their safety. Haman tho' eager to have the Jews cut off, yet will submit to the laws of his superstition, and not anticipate the supposed fortunate day, no not to gratify his impatient revenge. Probably he was in some fear, lest the Jews should prove too hard for their enemies ; and therefore durst not venture on such a hazardous enterprize, but under the smiles of a good omen. This may shame us, who often acquiesce not in the directions and disposals of providence when they cross our desires and intentions. He that believeth the lot, much more that believeth the promise, will not make haste. But see how God's wisdom serves its own purposes by mens folly : Haman has appealed to the lot, and to the lot he shall go, which, by adjourning the execution, gives judgment against him, and breaks the neck of the plot.

5. The bloody edict is hereupon drawn up, signed, and published, giving orders to the militia of every province, to be ready against the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and on that day to murder all the Jews, men, women, and children, and seize their effects, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* Had the decree been to banish all the Jews, and expel them out of the king's dominions, it had been severe enough, but sure never any act of cruelty appeared so bare-faced as this, to *destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all the Jews ;* appointing them *as sheep for the slaughter,* without shewing any cause why or wherefore. No crime is laid to their charge, it is not pretended that they were obnoxious to the publick justice, nor is any condition offered upon performance of which they might have their lives spared, but die they must, without mercy. Thus have the church's enemies thirsted after blood, the *blood of the saints and the martyrs* of Jesus, and drunk of it till they have been perfectly intoxicated, (*Rev. xvii. 6.*) yet still like the *horse-leech*, crying *give, give.* This cruel order is ratified with the king's seal, directed to the king's lieutenants, and drawn up in the king's name, and yet the king knows not what he doth. Posts are sent out with all expedition, to carry copies of the decree to the respective provinces, *ver. 15.* See how restless the malice of the church's enemies is, it will spare no pains, it will lose no time.

6. The different temper of the court and city hereupon. (1.) The court was very merry upon it ; the king and Haman sat down to drink, perhaps to drink confusion to all the Jews. Haman was afraid, lest the king's conscience should smite him for what he had done, and he should begin to wish it undone again, to prevent which, he engrossed him to himself, and kept him drinking : this cursed method, many take to drown their convictions, and harden their own hearts, and the hearts of others in sin. (2.) The city was very sad upon it, and the other cities of the kingdom, no doubt, when they had notice of it, *the city Shushan was perplexed ;* not only the Jews themselves, but all their neighbours that had any principles of justice and compassion. It grieved them to see their king so abused, *wickedness in the place of judgment*, Eccl. iii. 16. to see men that lived peaceably, treated so barbarously, and what would be the consequences of it to themselves they knew not. But the king and Haman cared for none of these things. Note, It is an absurd and impious thing to indulge our selves in mirth and pleasure, when the church is in distress, and the publick perplexed.





## C H A P. IV.

*We left God's Isaac bound upon the altar, and ready to be sacrificed, and the enemies triumphing in the prospect of it, but things here begin to work towards a deliverance, and they begin at the right end. (1.) The Jews friends lay to heart the danger, and lament it, ver. 1—4. (2.) Matters are concerted between Mordecai and Esther for the preventing of it. (1.) Esther enquires into this case, and receives a particular account of it, ver. 5—7. (2.) Mordecai urgeth her to intercede with the king for a revocation of the edict, ver. 8, 9. (3.) Esther objected the danger of addressing the king uncalled, ver. 10—12. (4.) Mordecai pressed her to run the venture, ver. 13, 14. (5.) Esther, after a religious fast of three days, promised to do so, ver. 15—17. and we shall find it sped well.*

1. **W**HEN Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry: 2. And came even before the kings gate: for none might enter into the kings gate clothed with sackcloth. 3. And in every province whithersoever the kings commandment, and his decree came, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4. ¶ So Esthers maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved, and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

Here we have an account of the general sorrow, that was among the Jews, upon the publishing of Haman's bloody edict against them. It was a sad time with the church.

1. Mordecai cried bitterly, *rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth*, ver. 1, 2. He not only thus vented his grief, but proclaimed it, that all might take notice of it, that he was not ashamed to own himself a friend to the Jews, and a fellow-sufferer with them, their brother and companion in tribulation, how despicable and how odious soever they were now represented by Haman's faction. It was bravely done, thus publicly to espouse what he knew to be a righteous cause, and the cause of God, even then when it seemed a desperate and a sinking cause. Mordecai laid the danger to heart more than any, because he knew that Haman's spite was against him primarily, and it was for his sake that the rest of the Jews were struck at; and therefore tho' he did not repent of his stiffness, for he persisted in it, *chap. v. 9.* yet it troubled him greatly, that his people should suffer for his scruples, which perhaps occasioned some of them to reflect upon him as too precise: But being able to appeal to God, that what he did, he did from a principle of conscience; he could with comfort *commit his own cause*, and that of his people, *to him that judgeth righteously*. God will keep those that are exposed by the tenderness of their consciences. Notice is here taken of a law, that *none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth*; tho' the arbitrary power of their kings oft, as now, set many a mourning, yet none must come near the king in a mourning dress, because he was not willing to hear the complaints of such. Nothing but what was gay and pleasant, must appear at court, and every thing that was melancholy must be banished thence; all in kings palaces *wear soft clothing*, Mat. xi. 8. not sackcloth: But thus to keep out the badges of sorrow, unless they could withal have kept out the causes of sorrow; to forbid sackcloth to enter, unless they could have forbidden sickness and trouble, and death to enter, was a jest. However this obliged Mordecai to keep his distance, and only to come before the gate, not to take his place in the gate.

2. All the Jews in every province, laid it much to heart, *ver. 3.* They denied themselves the comfort of their tables, for they fasted, and mingled tears with their meat and drink; and the comfort of their beds at night, for they *lay in sackcloth and ashes*. They who for want of confidence in God, and affection to their own land, had flaid in the land of their captivity, when Cyrus gave them liberty to be gone, now perhaps repented of their folly, and wished, when it was too late, they had complied with the call of God.

3. Esther the queen, upon a general intimation of the trouble Mordecai was in, was *exceedingly grieved*, ver. 4. Mordecai's grief was her's, such a respect did she still retain for him; and the Jews danger was her distress, for tho' a queen, she forgot not her relation to them. Let not the greatest think it below them to *grieve for the affliction of Joseph*, tho' they themselves be *anointed with the chief ointments*, Amos vi. 6. Esther sent change of raiment to Mordecai, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness; but because he would make her sensible of the greatness of his grief, and consequently of the

cause of it, *he received it not*, but was as one that refused to be comforted.

5. Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the kings chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was. 6. So Hatach went forth to Mordecai, unto the street of the city which was before the kings gate. 7. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the kings treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. 8. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people. 9. And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai. 10. ¶ Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; 11. All the kings servants and the people of the kings provinces do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is* one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. 12. And they told to Mordecai Esthers words. 13. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thy self that thou shalt escape in the kings house, more than all the Jews. 14. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy fathers house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth, whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this? 15. ¶ Then Esther bade them return Mordecai *this answer*, 16. Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish. 17. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

So strictly did the laws of Persia confine the wives, especially the king's wives, that it was not possible for Mordecai to have a conference with Esther about this important affair, but divers messages are here carried between them, by Hatach, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and, it seems, he was one she could confide in.

1. She sent to Mordecai to know more particularly and fully what the trouble was, which he was now lamenting, (*ver. 5.*) and why it was that he would not put off his sackcloth. To enquire thus after news, that we may know the better how to direct our griefs and joys, our prayers and praises well becomes all that love Zion. If we must weep with them that weep, we must know why they weep.

2. Mordecai sent her an authentick account of the whole matter, with a charge to her to intercede with the king in this matter. Mordecai told him *all that had happened unto him*, ver. 7. what a pique Haman had against him, for not bowing to him, and by what arts he had procured this edict, he sent her also a true copy of the edict, that she might see what imminent danger she and her people were in; and charged her if she had any respect for him, or any kindness for the Jewish nation, that she should appear now on their behalf, rectify the mis-informations with which the king was imposed upon, and set the matter in a true light, not doubting but that then he would vacate the decree.

3. She sent her case to Mordecai, that she could not without peril of her life address to the king, and therefore he put a great hardship upon her, in urging her to it; gladly would she wait, gladly would she stoop, to do the Jews a kindness, but if she must run the hazard of being put to death as a malefactor, she might well say, *I pray thee have me excused*, and find out some other intercessor. (1.) The law was express, all knew it; that whosoever comes to the king uncalled, should be put to death, unless he was pleased to *hold out the golden scepter to them*, and it was ten to one whether she should find him in so good a humour, *ver. 11.* This law was made not so much in prudence, for the greater safety of the king's person, as in pride, that being seldom seen, and not without great difficulty, he might be adored as a little god. A foolish law it was, for (1.) It made the kings themselves unhappy, confining them to their retirements for fear they should be seen. This



This made the royal palace little better than a royal prison, and the kings themselves could not but become morose, and perhaps melancholy, and so a terror to others, and a burthen to themselves. Many have their lives made miserable by their own haughtiness, and ill nature. (2.) It was bad for their subjects, for what good had they of a king that they might never have liberty to apply to, for the redress of grievances, and appeal to from the inferior judges. It is not thus in the court of the King of kings; to the footstool of his throne of grace, we may at any time *come boldly*, and may be sure of an answer of peace to the prayer of faith. We are welcome not only into the inner court, but even into the holiest, through the blood of Jesus. (3.) It was particularly very uncomfortable for their wives, that there was not a proviso in the law to except them, who were *bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh*: But perhaps it was wickedly intended as much against them as any other, that the kings might the more freely enjoy their concubines, and Esther knew it. Miserable was the kingdom, when the princes framed their laws to serve their lusts.

(2.) Her case was at present very discouraging; providence so ordered it, that just at this juncture, she was under a cloud, and the king's affections cooled towards her; for she had been *kept from his presence thirty days*; that her faith and courage might be the more tried, and that God's goodness in the favour she now found with the king, notwithstanding might shine the brighter. It is likely Haman, as he endeavoured by wine, so also by women, to divert the king from thinking of what he had done, and then Esther was neglected; from whom no doubt he did what he could to alienate the king, knowing her to be his back-friend.

4. Mordecai still insisted upon it, that whatever hazard she run she must apply herself to the king in this great affair, *ver. 13, 14*. No excuse will serve, but she must appear an advocate in this cause; he suggests to her,

(1.) That it was her own cause, for the decree to *destroy all the Jews*, did not except her, *Think not* therefore that *thou shalt escape in the king's house*, that the palace will be thy protection; and the crown save thy head: No, thou art a Jew, and if the rest be cut off, thou wilt be cut off too. It was certainly her wisdom rather to expose herself to a conditional death from her husband, than to a certain death from her enemy.

(2.) That it was a cause which one way or other would certainly be carried, and which therefore she might safely venture in. If thou shouldst decline the service, *enlargement and deliverance will arise to the Jews from another place*. This was the language of a strong faith, which *staggered not at the promise*, when the danger was most threatening, but *against hope believed in hope*. Instruments may fail; but God's covenant will not.

(3.) That if she deserted her friends now through cowardice and unbelief, she would have reason to fear, that some judgment from heaven would be the ruin of her and her family; *Thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed*, when the rest of the families of the Jews shall be preserved. He that by sinful shifts will save his life, and cannot find in his heart to trust God with it in the way of duty, shall lose it in the way of sin.

(4.) That the divine providence had an eye to this, in bringing her to be queen; *Who knows whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?* And therefore, (1.) Thou art bound in gratitude, to do this service for God and his church, else thou dost not answer the end of thine elevation. (2.) Thou needst not fear miscarrying in the enterprize; if God designed thee for it, he will bear thee out; and give thee success: Now, 1. It appeared by the event, that she did come to the kingdom, that she might be an instrument of the Jews deliverance, so that Mordecai was right in the conjecture: *Because the Lord loved his people*, therefore he made Esther queen. There is a wise counsel and design in all the providences of God; which is unknown to us till it is accomplished; but it will prove in the issue, that they are all intended for, and center in, the good of the church. 2. The probability of this, was a good reason why she should now bestir her self, and do her utmost for her people. We should every one of us consider, for what end God has put us in the place where we are, and study to answer that end; and when any particular opportunity of serving God and our generation offers it self, we must take care we do not let it slip, for we were intrusted with it, that we might improve it.

These things Mordecai urgeth to Esther, and some of the Jewish writers, who are fruitful in invention, add another thing which had *happened to him*, (*ver. 7.*) which he desired she might be told; that going home the night before in great heaviness upon the notice of Haman's plot, he met three Jewish children coming from school, whom he examined what they had learned that day, one of them told him his lesson was, *Prov. iii. 25, 26. Be not afraid of sudden fear*. The second told him his was, *Isa. viii. 10. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought*. The third told him his was, *Isa. xlv. 4. I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you*. O the goodness of God, faith Mordecai, who out of the mouth of babes and sucklings ordains strength!

5. Esther hereupon resolves, whatever it cost her, to apply her self to the king, but not till she and her friends had first applied themselves to God: Let them first by fasting and prayer obtain God's favour, and then she should hope to find favour with the king, *ver. 15, 16*. She speaks here,

No. xxxiv.

1. With the piety and devotion that became an Israelite; She had her eye up unto God, in whose hand the hearts of kings are; and on whom she depended to incline this king's heart towards her. She went in peril of her life, but would think her self safe; and would be easy when she had committed the keeping of her soul to God, and had put her self under his protection. She believed God's favour was to be obtained by prayer; that his people are a praying people, and he a prayer-hearing God: She knew it was the practice of good people, in extraordinary cases, to join fasting with prayer, and many of them to join together in fasting and prayer. She therefore (1.) Desired that Mordecai would direct the Jews that were in Shushan, to *sanctify a fast*, and *call a solemn assembly*, to meet in the respective synagogues to which they belonged, and to pray for her, and to keep a solemn fast, abstaining from all set meals, and all pleasant food for three days; and as much as possible from all food, in token of their humiliation for sin, and in a sense of their unworthiness of God's mercies. Those know not how to value the divine favours, who grudge thus much labour; and self-denial in the pursuit of it. (2.) She promised that she and her family would sanctify this fast, in her apartment of the palace; for she might not come to their assemblies; her maids were either Jews, or so far proselytes, that they joined with her in her fasting and prayer: Here is a good example of a mistress praying with her maids, and it is worthy to be imitated: Observe also, That those who are confined to privacy, may join their prayers with those of the solemn assemblies of God's people; they that are absent in body, may be present in spirit. And that those who desire, and have the prayers of others for them, must not think that that will excuse them from praying for themselves.

2. With the courage and resolution that became a queen: When we have fought God in this matter, *I will go in unto the king*, to intercede for my people; *I know it is not according to the king's law*, but it is according to God's law; and therefore whatever comes of it, I will venture, and not count my life dear to me, so that I may serve God and his church, and *if I perish, I perish*; I cannot lose my life in a better cause. Better do my duty, and die for my people, than balk my duty, and die with them; she reasons as the lepers, *2 Kin. vii. 4. If I sit still, I die*; if I venture, I may live, and be the life of my people; if the worst come to the worst (as we say,) *I shall but die*. Nothing venture, nothing win; she said not this in despair, or passion, but in a holy resolution to do her duty, and trust God with the issue, welcome his holy will. In the apocryphal part of this book, *chap. xiii. and xiv.* we have Mordecai's prayer, and Esther's upon this occasion, and both of them very particular and pertinent. In the sequel of the story, we shall find; that God said not to this seed of Jacob, *Seek ye me in vain*.

## C H A P. V.

*The last news we had of Haman left him in his cups, chap. iii. 15. Our last news of queen Esther left her in tears, fasting and praying. Now this chapter brings in, (1.) Esther in her joy; smiled upon by the king, and honoured with his company at her banquet of wine, ver. 1—8. (2.) Haman upon the fret, because he had not Mordecai's cap and knee, and with great indignation setting up a gallows for him, ver. 9—14. Thus they that sow in tears shall reap in joy, but the triumphing of the wicked is short.*

1. **N**OW it came to pass on the third day; that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. 2. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court; that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand: so Esther drew near, and touched the top of the scepter. 3. Then said the king unto her, what wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. 4. And Esther answered, if it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. 5. Then the king said, cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said: so the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. 6. ¶ And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. 7. Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is; 8. If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Ha-



man come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.

Here is, 1. Esther's bold approach to the king, *ver. 1.* When the time appointed for their fast was finished, she lost no time, but on the third day, when the impressions of her devotions were fresh upon her spirit, she addressed to the king. When the heart is enlarged in communion with God, it will be emboldened in doing and suffering for him. Some think the three days fast, was only one whole day, and two whole nights, in all which time they did not take any food at all, and this is called three days, as Christ's lying in the grave so long is. This favours that exposition, that on the third day the queen made her appearance at court. Resolutions that have difficulties and dangers to break through, should be pursued without delay, lest they cool and slacken: *What thou dost, which must be done boldly, do it quickly.* Now she put on her royal apparel, that she might the better recommend her self to the king, and laid aside her fast-day clothes. She put on her fine clothes, not to please her self but her husband; in her prayer, as we find it in the Apocrypha, *Esther xiv. 16.* she thus appeals to God, *Thou knowest, Lord, I abhor the sign of my high estate, which is upon my head, in the days wherein I shew my self, &c.* Whence let those whose rank obligeth them to wear rich clothes, learn to be dead to them, and not make them their adorning. She stood in the inner court over against the king, expecting her doom between hope and fear.

2. The favourable reception which the king gave her. When he saw her, she obtained favour in his sight. The apocryphal author and Josephus say, that she took two maids with her, on one she leaned, and the other bore up her train; that her countenance was cheerful and very amiable, but her heart was in anguish; that the king lifting up his countenance that shone with majesty, at first looked very fiercely upon her; whereupon she grew pale and fainted, and bowed her self on the head of the maid that went by her; but then God changed the spirit of the king, and in a fear he leaped from his throne, took her in his arms till she came to her self, and comforted her with loving words; here we are only told,

1. That he protected her from the law, and assured her of safety, by holding out to her the golden scepter, *ver. 2.* which she thankfully touched the top of, thereby presenting herself to him as a humble petitioner. Thus having had power with God, and prevailed, like Jacob, she had power with men too. *He that will lose his life for God shall save it, or find it in a better life.*

2. That he encouraged her address, *ver. 3.* *What wilt thou, queen Esther, and what is thy request?* So far was he from counting her an offender, that he seemed glad to see her, and desirous to oblige her. He that had divorced one wife for not coming when she was sent for, would not be severe to another, for coming when she was not sent for. God can turn the hearts of men, of great men, of those that act most arbitrarily, which way he pleaseth towards us. Esther feared she should perish, but is promised she shall have what she asks for, tho' it were the half of the kingdom. Note, God in his providence often prevents the fears, and outdoes the hopes of his people, especially when they venture in his cause. Let us from this story infer, as our Saviour doth from the parable of the unjust judge, an encouragement to pray always to our God, and not faint, *Luke xviii. 6, 7, 8.* Hear what this haughty king saith, *What is thy petition, and what is thy request, it shall be granted thee; and say, shall not God hear and answer the prayers of his own elect, that cry day and night to him?* Esther came to a proud imperious man, we come to the God of love and grace: She was not called, we are; the Spirit saith come, and the bride saith come. She had a law against her, we have a promise, many a promise, in favour of us, *Ask and it shall be given you.* She had no friend to introduce her, or intercede for her; but, on the contrary, he that was then the king's favourite, was her enemy. But we have an advocate with the Father, in whom he is well pleased. *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace.*

3. That all the request she had to make to him at this time was, that he would please to come to a banquet which she had prepared for him, and bring Haman along with him, *ver. 4, 5.* Hereby (1.) She would intimate to him, how much she valued his favour and company. Whatever she had to ask, that she desired above any thing, and would purchase at any rate. (2.) She would try how he stood affected to her, for if he should refuse this, it would be to no purpose as yet, to present her other request. (3.) She would endeavour to bring him into a pleasant humour, and soften his spirit, that he might with the more tenderness receive the impressions of the complaint she had to make to him. (4.) She would oblige him, by making court to Haman his favourite, and inviting him to come, whose company she knew he loved, and whom she desired to have present, when she made her complaint, for she would say nothing of him, but what she durst say to his face. (5.) She hoped at the banquet of wine to have a fairer and more favourable opportunity of presenting her petition. Wisdom is profitable, to direct how to manage some men that are hard to deal with, and to take them by the right handle.

4. That he readily came, and ordered Haman to come along with him, *ver. 5.* which was an indication of the kindness he still retained for her; if he really designed the destruction of her and

her people, he would not have accepted of her banquet. There he renewed his kind enquiry, *What is thy petition?* and his generous promise, that it should be granted, *even to the half of the kingdom, ver. 6.* a proverbial expression, by which he assured her, that he would deny her nothing in reason. Herod used it, *Mar. vi. 23.*

5. That then Esther thought fit to ask no more, but a promise that he would please to accept of another treat, the next day in her apartment, and Haman with him, *ver. 7, 8.* intimating to him, that then she would let him know what her business was. This adjourning of the main petition may be attributed (1.) To Esther's prudence; by this means she hoped yet further to win upon him, and ingratiate her self with him. Perhaps her heart failed her now, when she was going to make her request, and she desired to take some further time for prayer, that God would give her a mouth and wisdom. The putting of it off thus, it is likely, she knew would be well taken, as an expression of the great reverence she had for the king, and her lothness to be too pressing upon him. What is hastily asked, is many times as hastily denied, but what is asked with a pause, deserves to be considered. (2.) To God's providence, putting it into Esther's heart to delay her petition a day longer, she knew not why, but God did, that what was to happen in the intervening night betwixt and to-morrow, might further her design, and make way for her success; that Haman might arrive to the highest pitch of malice against Mordecai, and might begin to fall before him. The Jews perhaps blamed Esther as dilatory, and some of them began to suspect her sincerity, or at least her zeal, but the event disproved their jealousy, and all was for the best.

9. ¶ Then went Haman forth that day, joyful, and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. 10. Nevertheless Haman refrained himself, and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zereſh his wife. 11. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. 12. Haman said moreover, Yea Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared, but my self; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. 13. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. 14. ¶ Then said Zereſh his wife, and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king, that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made.

This account here given of Haman, is a comment upon that of Solomon, *Prov. xxi. 24.* *Proud and haughty scorner is his name that deals in proud wrath; never did any man more answer that name than Haman here, in whom pride and wrath have so much the ascendant. See him,*

1. Puffed up with the honour of being invited to Esther's feast. He was joyful, and glad of heart at it, *ver. 9.* Observe with what a high gust he speaks of it, *ver. 12.* how he values himself upon it, and how near he thinks it brings him to the perfection of felicity, that Esther the queen did let no man come with the king to the banquet, but his mighty self, and he thought it was because she was exceedingly charmed with his conversation, that the next day she had invited him also to come with the king; none so fit as he to bear the king company. Note, Self-admirers and self-flatterers are really self-deceivers. Haman pleased himself with the fancy, that the queen by this repeated invitation designed to honour him, whereas really she designed to accuse him, and in calling him to the banquet, did but call him to the bar. What magnifying glasses do proud men look their faces in! And how doth the pride of their heart deceive them! *Obad. 3.*

2. Vexing and fretting at the slight that Mordecai put upon him, and thereby made uneasy to himself, and to all about him. (1.) Mordecai was as stiff as ever, he stood not up, nor moved for him, *ver. 9.* What he did was from a principle of conscience, and therefore he stuck to it, and would not cringe to Haman, no not when he had reason to fear him, and Esther her self complimented him. He knew God could, and would, deliver him and his people from the rage of Haman, without any such mean and sneaking expedients to mollify him. They that walk in a holy sincerity, may walk in a holy security, and go on in their work, not fearing what man can do unto them. *He that walks uprightly, walks surely.* (2.) Haman can as ill bear it as ever; nay, the higher he is lifted up, the more impatient is he of contempt, and the more enraged at it. (1.) It made his own spirit restless, and put



put him into a grievous toils; He was full of indignation, ver. 9. and yet *refrained himself*, ver. 10. Gladly would he have drawn his sword, and run Mordecai through for affronting him thus, but he hoped shortly to see him fall with all the Jews, and therefore with much ado prevailed with himself to forbear stabbing him. What a struggle had he in his own bosom between his anger, which required Mordecai's death immediately; *O that I had of his flesh, I cannot be satisfied!* Job xxxi. 31. and his malice which had determined to wait for the general massacre. Thus *thorns and snares are in the way of the froward*. (2.) It made all his enjoyments senseless; this little affront he received from Mordecai, was the dead fly which spoiled all his pot of precious ointment; he owned it himself in the presence of his wife and his friends, to the everlasting reproach of a proud and discontented mind, that he had no comfort in his estate, preferment, and family, as long as Mordecai lived, and had a place in the king's gate, ver. 10, 11, 13. He took notice of his own riches and honours, the numerousness of his family, and the high posts to which he was advanced, that he was the darling of the prince, and the idol of the court, and yet *all this avails him nothing*, as long as Mordecai is unchanged. Those that are disposed to be uneasy, will never want something or other to be uneasy at; and proud men, tho' they have much to their mind, if they have not all to their mind, it is as nothing to them. The thousandth part of what Haman had, would serve to make a humble modest man, as much of a happiness as he expects from this world, and yet Haman complains as passionately as if he had been sunk into the lowest degree of poverty and disgrace.

3. Meditating revenge, and assisted therein by his wife and his friends, ver. 14. They saw how gladly he would dispense with his own resolution, of deferring the slaughter till the time determined by the lot, and therefore advise him to take an earnest and foretaste of the satisfaction he then expected in the speedy execution of Mordecai; let him have that to stay his stomach: And having, as he thought, made sure the destruction of all the Jews, at the time appointed, he will not think scorn for the present, to lay hands on Mordecai alone. (1.) For the pleasing of his fancy, they advise him to get a gallows ready, and have it set up before his own door; that as soon as ever he could get the warrant signed, there might be no delay of the execution, he need not so much as to stay the making of the gallows. This is very agreeable to Haman, who has the gallows up presently; it must be fifty cubits high, or as near that as might be, for the greater disgrace of Mordecai, and to make him a spectacle to every one that passed by; and it must be before Haman's door, that all men might take notice it was to the idol of his revenge that Mordecai was sacrificed, and that he might feed his eyes with the sight. (2.) For the gaining of his point, they advise him to go early in the morning to the king, and get an order from him for the hanging of Mordecai, which they doubted not would be readily granted to one that was so much the king's favourite, and who had so easily obtained an edict for the destruction of the whole nation of the Jews; there needed no feigned suggestion, it was enough if he let the king know, that Mordecai, in contempt of the king's command, refused to reverence him. And now we leave Haman to go to bed, pleased with the thoughts of seeing Mordecai hanged the next day, and then going merrily to the banquet, and not dreaming of handselling his own gallows.

## C H A P. VI.

*It is a very surprizing scene that opens in this chapter: Haman, when he hoped to be Mordecai's judge, was made his page, to his great confusion and mortification; and thus way was made for the defeat of Haman's plot, and the deliverance of the Jews. (1.) The providence of God recommends Mordecai in the night to the king's favour, ver. 1—3. (2.) Haman who came to incense the king against him, is employed as an instrument of the king's favour to him, ver. 4—11. (3.) From this his friends read him his doom, which is executed in the next chapter, ver. 12, 13, 14. And now it appears, that Esther's intercession for her people was happily adjourned, De die in diem.*

1. **O**N that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king. 2. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. 3. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

How Satan put it into the heart of Haman to contrive Mordecai's death, we read in the foregoing chapter; how God put it into the heart of the king to contrive Mordecai's honour, we are here told; now if the king's word will prevail above Haman's, for tho' Haman be a great man, the king in the throne must be above him; much more will the counsel of God stand, whatever devices

there are in mens hearts; it is to no purpose therefore for Haman to oppose it, when both God and the king will have Mordecai honoured, and that in this juncture, when his preferment, and Haman's disappointment, would help to ripen the great affair of the Jews deliverance, for the effort that Esther was to make towards it the next day. Sometimes delay may prove to have been good conduct: Stay a while, and we may have done the sooner: *Cultando restituit rem*. Let us trace the steps which providence took towards the advancement of Mordecai.

1. *On that night could not the king sleep.* His sleep fled away, so the word is, and perhaps like a shadow, the more carefully he pursued it, the further it went from him: Sometimes we cannot sleep, because we fain would sleep. Even after a banquet of wine he could not sleep, when providence had a design to serve in keeping him waking. We read of no bodily indisposition he was under that might break his sleep, but God whose gift sleep is, withheld it from him. Those that are never so much resolved to cast away care, cannot always do it, they find it in their pillows when they neither expect nor welcome it. He that commanded one hundred twenty-seven provinces could not command one hour's sleep. Perhaps the charms of Esther's conversation the day before, gave occasion to his heart to reproach him for neglecting her, and banishing her his presence, tho' she was the wife of his bosom, for above thirty days, and that might keep him waking. An offended conscience can find a time to speak when it will be heard.

2. When he could not sleep, he called to have the book of records, the journals of his reign, read to him, ver. 1. Surely he did not design that should lull him asleep, it would rather fill his head with cares, and drive away sleep: but God put it into his heart to call for them, rather than for musick or songs, which the Persian kings used to be attended with, Dan. vi. 18. and which would have been more likely to compose him to rest. When men do that which is unaccountable, we know not what God intends by it. Perhaps he would have this book of business read to him, that he might improve time, and be laying some useful projects. Had it been king David's case, he would have found some other entertainment for his thoughts when he could not sleep, he would have remembered God, and meditated upon him, Psal. lxxiii. 6. and if he would have had any book read to him, it should have been his Bible, for in that law did he meditate day and night.

3. The servant that read to him, either light first on that article which concerned Mordecai, or reading long, came to it at length. Among other things it was found written, that Mordecai had discovered a plot against the life of the king, which prevented the execution of it, ver. 2. Mordecai was not in such favour at court, that the reader should designedly pitch upon that place, but providence directed him to it; nay, if we may believe the Jews tradition, (as bishop Patrick relates it) opening the book at this place, he turned over the leaves, and would have read another part of the book, but the leaves flew back again to the same place where he opened it, so that he was forced to read that paragraph. How Mordecai's good service was recorded, we read, chap. ii. 23. and here it is found upon record.

4. The king enquired what honour and dignity had been done to Mordecai for this, suspecting that this good service had gone unrewarded, and, like Pharaoh's butler, he remembers it as *his fault this day*, Gen. xli. 9. Note, The law of gratitude is a law of nature; we ought particularly to be grateful to our inferiors, and not to think all their services due debts to us, but that they make us indebted to them. Two rules of gratitude may be gathered from the king's enquiry here. (1.) *Better honour than nothing*: If we cannot, or need not, make a recompence to those who have been kind to us, yet let us do them honour, by acknowledging their kindnesses, and owning our obligations to them. (2.) *Better late than never*. If we have long neglected to make grateful returns for good offices done us, let us at length bethink ourselves of our debts.

5. The servants informed him, that nothing had been done to Mordecai for that eminent service; in the king's gate he sat before, and there he still sat. Note, (1.) It is common for great men to take little notice of their inferiors. The king knew not whether Mordecai was preferred or no, till his servants informed him. High spirits take a pride in being careless and unconcerned about those that are below them, and ignorant of their state. The great God takes cognizance of the meanest of his servants, knows what dignity is done them, and what disgrace. (2.) Humility and modesty and self-denial, tho' in God's account they are of great price, yet they commonly balk mens preferment in the world. Mordecai riseth no higher than the king's gate, while proud ambitious Haman gets the king's ear and heart: but tho' the aspiring rise fast, the humble stand fast: honour makes proud men giddy, but *upholds the humble in spirit*, Prov. xxix. 23. (3.) Honour and dignity is rated high in the king's books. He doth not ask what reward has been given Mordecai? What money? What estate? but only what honour? A poor thing, and which if he had not wherewith to support it would be but a burthen. (4.) The greatest merits, and the best services are often overlooked and go unrewarded among men: little honour is done to those who best deserve it, are fittest for it, and would do most good.



good with it. See *Ecc.* ix. 14, 15, 16. The acquisition of wealth and honour is usually a perfect lottery, in which they that venture least, commonly carry off the best prize. Nay, (5.) Good services are sometimes so far from being a man's preferment, that they will not be his protection; Mordecai is at this time by the king's edict doomed to destruction, with all the Jews, tho' it is owned he deserved dignity. Those that faithfully serve God need not fear being thus ill paid.

4. ¶ And the king said, Who is in the court? (now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him) 5. And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. 6. So Haman came in: and the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? (Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour, more than to my self?) 7. And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, 8. Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon; and the crown royal which is set upon his head: 9. And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man *withal*, whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour. 10. Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel, and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. 11. Then took Haman the apparel, and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

It is now morning; and people begin to stir.

1. Haman is so impatient to get Mordecai hanged, that he comes early to court, to be ready at the king's levee, before any other business was brought before him, to get a warrant for his execution, (*ver.* 4.) which he doubts not to have at the first word. The king would gratify him in a greater thing than that; and he could tell the king that he was so confident of the justice of his request, and the king's favour to him in it, that he had got the gallows ready, one word from the king would compleat his satisfaction.

2. The king is so impatient to have Mordecai honoured, that he sends to know who was in the court, that was fit to be employed in it. Word is brought him, that Haman is in the court, *ver.* 5. Let him come in, saith the king; the fittest man to be made use of both in directing and dispensing the king's favours; and the king knows nothing of any quarrel he had with Mordecai. Haman is brought in immediately, proud of the honour done him, in being admitted into the king's bed-chamber, as it should seem, *before he was up*; for let the king but give orders for the dignifying of Mordecai, and he will be easy in his mind, and try to sleep. Now Haman thinks he has the fairest opportunity he could wish for to solicit against Mordecai; but the king's heart is as full as his, and it is fit he should speak first.

3. The king asks Haman, how he should express his favour to one whom he had marked for a favourite. *What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour?* *ver.* 6. Note, It is a good property in kings and other superiors, to delight in bestowing rewards, and not to delight in punishing. Parents and masters should take a pleasure in commending and encouraging that which is good in those under their charge.

4. Haman concludes he himself was the favourite intended, and therefore prescribes the highest instances of honour that could for once be bestowed upon a subject. His proud heart presently suggested, *to whom would the king delight to do honour more than to my self?* None deserves it so well as I, thinks Haman, nor stands so fair for it. See how mens pride deceives them. (1.) Haman had a better opinion of his merits than there was cause for. He thought none so worthy of honour as himself: it is a foolish thing for us thus to think ourselves the only deserving persons, or more deserving than any other. The deceitfulness of our own hearts appears in nothing so much as in the good conceit we have of ourselves and our own performances, against which we should therefore constantly watch and pray. (2.) He had a better opinion of his interest than there was reason for. He thought the king loved and valued nobody but himself, but was deceived. Others esteem of us, we should suspect to be not so great as it seems to be, or as

we are sometimes willing to believe it is, that we may not think too well of ourselves, nor place too much confidence in others.

Now Haman thinks he is carving out honour for himself, and therefore doth it very liberally (*ver.* 8, 9). Nay, he doth it presumptuously, prescribing honours too great to be conferred upon any subject. That he must be dressed in the royal robes; wear the royal crown; and ride the king's own horse; in short, he must appear in all the pomp and grandeur of the king himself, only he must not carry the scepter, the emblem of power. He must be attended by one of the king's most noble princes; that must be his lacquey, and all the people must be made to take notice of him, and do him reverence, for he must ride in state through the streets, and it must be proclaimed before him for his honour, and the encouragement of all to seek the ruler's favour, *this shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour*, which had the same intention with that which was proclaimed before Joseph, *bow the knee*, for every good subject will honour those whom the king delights to honour; and shall not every good Christian then honour those whom the King of kings delights to honour, and call the saints which are on the earth, the excellent ones.

5. The king confounds him with a positive order, that he should immediately go himself, and put all this honour upon Mordecai the Jew, *ver.* 10. If the king had but said, as Haman expected, *thou art the man*, what a fair opportunity would he have had to do the errand he came on, and to have desired, that, to grace the solemnity of his triumphs, Mordecai, his sworn enemy, might be hanged at the same time; but how is he thunder-struck when the king bids him not order all this to be done, but to do it himself to Mordecai the Jew, the very man he hated above all men, and whose ruin he was now designing. Now it is to no purpose to think of moving any thing to the king against Mordecai, when he is *the man whom the king delights to honour*. Solomon saith, *the heart of the king is unsearchable*, Prov. xxv. 3. but it is not unchangeable.

6. Haman dares not dispute, nor so much as seem to dislike the king's order, but with the greatest regret and reluctancy imaginable brings it to Mordecai, who, I suppose, did no more cringe to Haman now than he had done, valuing his counterfeit respects no more than he had valued his concealed malice. The apparel is brought, Mordecai is dressed up, and rides in state through the city, under the notion of the king's favourite, *ver.* 11. It is hard to say which of the two put a greater force upon himself; proud Haman in putting this honour upon Mordecai, or humble Mordecai in accepting it; the king will have it so, and both must submit. Upon this account it was agreeable to Mordecai, as it was an indication of the king's favour, and gave hope that Esther would prevail for the reversing of the edict against the Jews.

12. ¶ And Mordecai came again to the king's gate: but Haman hastened to his house, mourning, and having his head covered. 13. And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends, every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wife men, and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him. 14. And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

We may here observe,

1. How little Mordecai was puffed up with his advancement. He came again to the king's gate, *ver.* 12. he returned to his place and the duty of it immediately, and minded his business as close as he had done before. Honour is well bestowed on those that are not made proud and idle by it; and will not think themselves above their business.

2. How much Haman was cast down with his disappointment. He could not bear it; to wait upon any man, especially Mordecai, and at this time, when he hoped to have seen him hanged, was enough to break such a proud heart as he had. He hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered, as one that looked upon himself sunk, and in a manner condemned. What harm had it done him to stoop thus to Mordecai? Was he ever the worse for it? Was it not what he himself proposed to be done, by one of the king's most noble princes? Why then should he grudge to do it himself? But that will break a proud man's heart, which would not break a humble man's sleep.

3. How his doom was out of this event read him by his wife and his friends; if Mordecai be, as they say he is, *of the seed of the Jews*, before whom thou hast begun to fall, tho' but in a point of honour, never expect to prevail against him, for thou shalt surely fall before him, *ver.* 13. Miserable comforters are they all; they do not advise him to repent, and ask Mordecai's pardon for his ill design against him, but foretel his destiny as fatal and unavoidable. Two things they foresee, (1.) That Haman would be disappointed in his enterprize against the Jews; *thou shalt not prevail*, to root out that people; heaven plainly fights against thee. (2.) That he himself would be destroyed, *thou shalt surely fall before him*;



him; the contest between Michael and the Dragon will not be a drawn battle, no, Haman must fall before Mordecai. Two things they ground their prognostications upon. (1.) This Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews; feeble Jews, their enemies sometimes called them, but formidable Jews they sometimes found them. They are a holy seed, a praying seed, in covenant with God, and a seed that the Lord hath all along blessed, and therefore let not their enemies expect to triumph over them. (2.) That he had begun to fall, and therefore he is certainly a gone man. It has been observed of great court favourites that when once they have been frowned upon, they have fallen all before them, as fast as they rose; it is true of the church's enemies. When God begins with them, he will make an end. As for God, his work is perfect.

4. How seasonably he was now sent for to the banquet that Esther had prepared, *ver. 14.* He thought it seasonable, in hopes it would revive his drooping spirits, and save his sinking honour. But really it was seasonable, because his spirits being broke by this sore disappointment, he might the easier be run down by Esther's complaints against him. The wisdom of God is seen in timing the means of the church's deliverance, so as to manifest his own glory.

## C H A P. VII.

*We are now to attend the second banquet to which the king and Haman were invited: and there, (1.) Esther presents her petition to the king for her life, and the life of her people, ver. 1—4. (2.) She plainly tells the king that Haman was the man who designed her ruin, and the ruin of all her friends, ver. 5, 6. (3.) The king thereupon gave orders for the hanging of Haman upon the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai, which was done accordingly, ver. 7—10. and thus, by the destruction of the plotter, a good step was taken towards the defeating of the plot.*

1. **S**O the King and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. 2. And the king said again to Esther, on the second day, at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, *even to the half of the kingdom.* 3. Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. 4. For we are sold, I and my people to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish: but if we had been sold for bond-men and bond-women, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. 5. ¶ Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he? and where is he that durst presume in his heart to do so? 6. And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman, Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

The king in humour, and Haman out of humour, meet at Esther's table. Now here,

1. The king urgeth Esther a third time to tell him what her request was, for he longed to know, and repeats his promise, that it should be granted, *ver. 2.* If the king had now forgot that Esther had an errand to him, and had not again asked what it was, she could scarce have known how to renew it her self; but he was mindful of it, and now was bound with the threefold cord of a promise thrice made to favour her.

2. Esther at length surprizeth the king with a petition not for wealth or honour, or the preferment of some of her friends to some high post, which the king expected, but for the preservation of her self and her countrymen from death and destruction, *ver. 3, 4.* Even a stranger, a criminal, shall be permitted to petition for his life. But that a friend, a wife, should have occasion to present such a petition was very affecting: *Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.* Two things bespeak lives very precious, and fit to be saved, if innocent, at any expence. (1.) Majesty. If it be a crowned head that is struck at, it is time to stir. Esther's was so: *Let my life be given me;* if thou hast any affection for the wife of thy bosom, now is a time to shew it, for that is the life that lies at stake. (2.) Multitude. If they be many lives, very many, and those no way forfeited, that are aimed at, no time should be lost, nor pains spared to prevent the mischief. It is not a friend or two, but my people, a whole nation, and a nation dear to me, for the saving of which I now intercede.

To move the king the more, she suggests, (1.) That she and her people were bought and sold. They had not sold themselves by any offence against the government, but were sold to gratify the pride and revenge of one man. (2.) That it was not their liberty only, but their lives that were sold. Had we been sold (saith she) into

slavery, I would not have complained, for in time we might have recovered our liberty, tho' the king would have made but an ill bargain of it, and *not have increased his wealth by our price.* Whatever had been paid for us, the loss of so many industrious hands out of his kingdom, would have been more damage to the treasury, than the price would countervail. To persecute good people, is as impolitic as it is impious, and a manifest wrong to the interests of princes and states; they are weakened and impoverished by it. But this was not the case. *We are sold, (saith she) to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish,* and then it is time to speak. She refers to the words of the decree, *chap. iii. 13.* which aimed at nothing short of their destruction. This would touch in a tender part, if there were any such in the king's heart, and would bring him to relent.

3. The king stands amazed at the remonstrance, and asks, *ver. 5. Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?* What contrive the murder of the queen and all her friends? Is there such a man? such a monster rather in nature? *Who is he, and where is he, whose heart has filled him to do so?* Or, who hath filled his heart; he admires, 1. That any one should be so bad as to think such a thing; Satan certainly filled his heart. 2. That any one should be so bold as to do such a thing; should have his heart so fully set in him to do wickedly; should be so very daring? Note, 1. It is hard to imagine there should be such horrid wickedness committed in the world as really there is. Who, where, is he, that dares, presumes, to question the being of God and his providence, to banter his oracles, profane his name, persecute his people, and yet bid defiance to his wrath. Such there are, to think of whom, is enough to make *horror take hold of us, Psal. cxix. 53.* 2. We sometimes startle at the mention of that evil, which yet we our selves are chargeable with. Ahasuerus is amazed at that wickedness, which he himself was guilty of, for he consented to that bloody edict against the Jews: *Thou art the man,* might Esther too truly have said.

4. Esther plainly charges Haman with it before his face: here he is, let him speak for himself; for therefore he is invited, *The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman, ver. 6.* It is he that has designed our murder, and, which is worse, has basely drawn the king in to be *particeps criminis*, ignorantly agreeing to it.

5. Haman is soon apprehensive of his danger. *He was afraid before the king and the queen;* and it was time for him to fear, when the queen was his prosecutor, the king his judge, and his own conscience a witness against him, and the surprizing operations of providence against him that same morning could not but increase his fear. Now he has little joy of his being invited to the banquet of wine, but finds himself in straits, when he thought himself in the fulness of his sufficiency. *He is cast into a net by his own feet.*

7. ¶ And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath, *went into the palace-garden;* and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen: for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king. 8. Then the king returned out of the palace-garden, into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. 9. And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. 10. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

Here, 1. The king retires in anger. He rose from table in a great passion, and *went into the palace-garden* to cool himself, and to consider what was to be done, *ver. 7.* He sent not for his *seven wise counsellors which knew the times*, being ashamed to consult with them about the undoing of that which he had rashly done without their knowledge or advice; but he went to walk in the garden a while, to compare in his thoughts what Esther had now informed him of, with what had formerly passed between him and Haman. And we may suppose him (1.) Vexed at himself that he should be such a fool as to doom a guiltless nation to destruction, and his own queen among the rest, upon the base suggestions of a self-seeking man, without examining the truth of his allegations. They that do things with a self-will, reflect upon them afterwards with a self-reproach. (2.) Vexed at Haman whom he had laid in his bosom, that he should be such a villain as to abuse his interest in him, to draw him to consent to so ill a thing. When he saw himself betrayed by one he had caressed, he was full of indignation at him, yet would say nothing, till he had taken time for second thoughts, to see whether they would make the matter better or worse than it first appeared, that he might



might proceed accordingly. When we are angry, we should pause a while, before we come to any resolution, as those that have a rule over our own spirits, and are governed by reason.

2. Haman becomes a humble petitioner to the queen for his life. He might easily perceive by the king's hasty flying out of the room, that *there was evil determined against him*. For the wrath of a king, such a king, is as the roaring of a lion, and as messengers of death; and now see (1.) How mean Haman looks, when he stands up at first, and then falls down at Esther's feet, to beg she would save his life, and take all he had. They that are most haughty, insolent, and imperious, when they are in power and prosperity, are commonly the most abject and poor spirited when the wheel turns upon them. Cowards they say, are most cruel, and then consciousness of their cruelty makes them the more cowardly. (2.) How great Esther looks, who of late had been neglected and doomed to the slaughter, *tamquam ovis*, now her sworn enemy owns that he lies at her mercy, and begs his life at her hand. Thus did God regard the low estate of his hand-maiden, and scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts, Luke i. 48, 51. And compare with this, that promise made to the Philadelphian church, Rev. iii. 9. *I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee*. The day is coming when those that hate and persecute God's chosen ones, would gladly be beholden to them; *Give us of your oil; father Abraham, send Lazarus. The upright shall have dominion in the morning*.

3. The king returns yet more exasperated against Haman. The more he thinks of him, the worse he thinks of him, and of what he had done. It was but lately, that every thing Haman said and did, even that which was most criminal, was taken well, and construed to his advantage; now, on the contrary, what Haman did, that was not only innocent, but a sign of repentance, is ill taken, and, without colour of reason, construed to his disadvantage. He lay in terror at Esther's feet to beg for his life; What? saith the king, *will he force the queen also before me in the house?* Not that he thought he had any such intention, but having been musing on Haman's design to slay the queen, and finding him in this posture, he takes occasion from it thus to vent his passion against Haman, as a man that would not flick at the greatest and most impudent piece of wickedness. He designed to slay the queen, and to slay her *with me in the house*, will he in like manner force her? What ravish her first, and then murder her? He that had a design upon her life, may well be suspected to have a design upon her chastity.

4. Those about him were ready to be the instruments of his wrath. The courtiers that adored Haman when he was the rising sun, set themselves as much against him now he is a falling star, and are even glad of an occasion to run him down, so little sure can proud men be of the interest they think they have. (1.) As soon as the king spake an angry word, they covered Haman's face, as a condemned man, not worthy any more either to see the king, or to be seen by him; they marked him for execution; those that are hanged, commonly have their faces covered. See how ready the servants were to take the first hint of the king's mind in this matter. *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam ut semper & odit damnatos*. If Haman be going down, they all cry, down with him. (2.) One of them that had been lately sent to Haman's house, to fetch him to the banquet, informed the king of the gallows which Haman had prepared for Mordecai, ver. 9. Now Mordecai is the favourite, the chamberlain applauds him, he *spoke good for the king*, and Haman being in disgrace, every thing is taken notice of, that might make against him, incense the king against him, and fill up the measure of his iniquity.

5. The king gives orders that he should be hanged upon his own gallows, which was done accordingly, and he was not so much as asked what he had to say, why this judgment should not be passed upon him and execution awarded. The sentence is short, hang him thereon, and the execution speedy, *so they hanged Haman on the gallows*, ver. 10. See here, 1. Pride brought down. He that expected every one to do him reverence, is now made an ignominious spectacle to the world, and himself sacrificed to justice, who disdained that less than a whole nation should be sacrificed to his revenge. God resists the proud, and those whom he resists will find him irresistible. 2. Persecution punished. Haman was upon many accounts a wicked man, but his enmity to God's church was his most provoking crime, and for that the God to whom vengeance belongs here reckons with him, and tho' his plot was defeated, gives him according to the wickedness of his endeavours, Psal. xxviii. 4. 3. Mischief returned upon the person himself that contrived it; the wicked snared in the work of his own hands, Psal. vii. 15, 16.—ix. 15, 16. Haman justly hanged on the same gallows which he had unjustly prepared for Mordecai. If he had not set up that gallows, perhaps the king would not have thought of ordering him to be hanged; but if he rear a gallows for the man whom the king delights to honour, the humour is very natural, that he should be ordered to try it himself, and see how it fits him, see how he likes it. The enemies of God's church have often been thus taken in their own craftiness. In the morning Haman was designing himself for the robes, and Mordecai for the gallows, but the tables are turned, Mordecai has the

crown, Haman the cross. *The Lord is known by such judgments which he executeth*. See Prov. xi. 8.—xxi. 18.

Lastly, The satisfaction which the king had in this execution; *Then was the king's wrath pacified*, and not till then. As well pleased was he, in ordering Haman to be hanged; as in ordering Mordecai to be honoured. Thus shall it be done to the man; whom the king delights to take vengeance on. God faith of wicked men, Ezek. v. 13. *I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted*.

## C H A P. VIII.

*We left the plotter hanging, and are now to see what becomes of his plot*. (1.) His plot was to raise an estate for himself, and all his estate being confiscated for treason, is given to Esther and Mordecai, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His plot was to ruin the Jews; and as to that, (1.) Esther earnestly intercedes for the reversing of the edict against them, ver. 3—6. (2.) It is in effect done by another edict here published, empowering the Jews to stand up in their own defence against their enemies, ver. 7—14. (3.) This occasions great joy to the Jews, and all their friends, ver. 15—17.

1. **O**N that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews enemy, unto Esther the queen: and Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her. 2. And the king took off his ring which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

It was but lately that we had Esther and Mordecai in tears, in fears, but fasting and praying; now let us see how to them there arose light in darkness.

1. Here is Esther enriched. Haman was hanged as a traitor, therefore his estate was forfeited to the crown, and the king gave it all to Esther, in recompence for the fright that wicked man had put her into; and the vexation he had created her, ver. 1. His houses and lands, goods and chattels, and all the money he had heaped up, while he was prime minister of state, which we may suppose was no little; is given to Esther, it is all her own, added to the allowance she already had. Thus is *the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just*. And the innocent divides the silver, Job xxvi. 17, 18. What Haman would have done mischief with, Esther will do good with, and estates are to be valued as they are to be used.

2. Mordecai advanced. His pompous procession this morning through the streets of the city, was but a sudden flash or blaze of honour, but here we have the more durable and gainful preferments to which he was raised, which yet the other happily made way for.

1. He is now owned as the queen's cousin, which till now, tho' Esther had been four years queen, for ought appears, the king did not know. So humble, so modest, a man was Mordecai, and so far from being ambitious of a place at court, that he concealed his relation to the queen, and her obligations to him as her guardian, and never made use of her interest for any advantage of his own. Who but Mordecai, could have taken so little notice of so great an honour? But now he was brought *before the king*, introduced as we say, to kiss his hand, for now at length, *Esther had told what he was to her*, not only near a-kin to her, but the best friend she had in the world, who took care of her when she was an orphan, and one whom she still respected as a father. Now the king finds himself for his wife's sake, more obliged than he thought he had been, to delight in doing honour to Mordecai. How great were the merits of that man, to whom both king and queen, did in effect owe their lives. Being brought before the king, to him no doubt he bowed and did reverence, tho' he would not to Haman an Amalekite.

2. The king makes him lord privy-seal in the room of Haman; all the trust he had reposed in him, and all the power he had given him, is here transferred to Mordecai; for the ring which he had taken from Haman, he gave to Mordecai, and makes this trusty humble man as much his favourite, his confident and his agent, as ever that proud perfidious wretch; a happy change he made of his bosom-friends, and so, no doubt, he and his people soon found it.

3. The queen makes him her steward, for the management of Haman's estate, and for getting and keeping possession of it. *She set Mordecai over the house of Haman*. See the vanity of laying up treasure upon earth; he that *heapeth up riches, knoweth not who shall gather them*, Psal. xxxix 6. not only whether he shall be a wise man or a fool, Eccles. ii. 19. but whether he shall be a friend or an enemy. With what little pleasure; nay, with what constant vexation would Haman have looked upon his estate, if he could have foreseen that Mordecai, the man he hated above all men in the world, should have rule over all that wherein he had laboured, and thought he shewed himself wise! It is our interest therefore, to make sure those riches which will not be left behind, but will go with us to another world.



3. ¶ And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears, to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. 4. Then the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, 5. And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes; let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the kings provinces: 6. For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? 7. ¶ Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen, and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. 8. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse. 9. Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month (that is the month Sivan) on the three and twentieth day thereof, and it was written (according to all that Mordecai commanded) unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. 10. And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries: 11. Wherein the king granted the Jews, which were in every city, to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish all the power of the people and province, that would assault them, both little ones, and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey: 12. Upon one day, in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. 13. The copy of the writing, for a commandment to be given in every province, was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day, to avenge themselves on their enemies. 14. So the posts that rode upon mules, and camels went out, being hastened, and pressed on by the king's commandment; and the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

Haman the chief enemy of the Jews was hanged, Mordecai and Esther their chief friends were sufficiently protected; but many others there were in the king's dominions that hated the Jews, and desired their ruin, and to their rage and malice, all the rest of that people lay exposed, for the edict against them was still in force, in pursuance of which, their enemies would at the day appointed fall upon them, and they would be deemed as rebels against the king and his government, if they should offer to resist, and take up arms in their own defence; for the preventing of this,

1. The queen here makes intercession, with much affection and importunity. She came a second time uncalled into the king's presence, ver. 3. and was, as before, encouraged to present her petition, by the king's holding out the golden scepter to her, ver. 4. And her petition is, the king having put away Haman, would put away the mischief of Haman, and his device against the Jews, that that might not take place, now he was taken off. Many a man's mischief survives him, and the wickedness he devised is in the doing, when he is gone. What men project and write, may after their death be either very profitable or very pernicious: it was therefore requisite in this case, that for the defeating of Haman's plot, they should apply themselves to the king for a further act of grace; that, by another edict, he would reverse the letters devised by Haman, and which he wrote, (he doth not say, which the king consented to, and confirmed with his own seal, she leaves it to his own conscience to say that) by which he took an effectual course to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces, ver. 5. If the king were indeed, as he seemed to be, troubled that such a decree was made, he could not do less than revoke it. For what is repentance, but undoing to the utmost of our power what we have done amiss?

(1.) This petition Esther presents with much affection. She fell down at the king's feet, and besought him with tears, ver. 3. Every tear as precious as any of the pearls with which he was adorned. It was time to be earnest when the church of God lay at stake. Let none be so great as to be unwilling to stoop, none so merry as to be unwilling to weep, when thereby they may do any service to God's church and people. Esther, tho' safe herself, fell down, and begged with tears for the deliverance of her people.

(2.) She expresseth it with great submission, and a mighty deference to the king and his wisdom and will, ver. 5. If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and again, if the thing itself seem right and reasonable before the king, and if I that ask it, be pleasing in his eyes, let the decree be reversed: even then when we have never so much reason and justice on our side, and have never so clear a cause to plead, yet it becomes us to speak to our betters with humility and modesty, and all possible expressions of respect, and not talk like demandants, when we are supplicants. There is nothing lost by decency and good breeding. As soft answers turn away wrath, so soft askings obtain favour.

(3.) She enforceth her petition with a pathetic plea, for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people? Little comfort can I have of my own life, if I cannot prevail for theirs: as good share in the evil myself as see it come upon them; for how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred, that are dear to me. Esther, a queen, owns her poor kindred, and speaks of them with a very tender concern. Now it was, that she mingled her tears with her words, that she wept and made supplication; we read of no tears when she begged for her own life, but now she was sure of that, she wept for her people. Tears of pity and tenderness are the most Christ like. They that are truly concerned for the publick, would rather die in the last ditch, than live to see the desolations of the church of God, and the ruin of their country. Tender spirits cannot bear to think of the destruction of their people and kindred, and therefore dare not omit any opportunity of giving them relief.

2. The king here takes a course for the preventing of the mischief that Haman had designed.

1. The king knew and informed the queen, that according to the constitution of the Persian government, the former edict could not be revoked, ver. 8. What is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may not under any pretence whatsoever be reversed. This was a fundamental article of their magna charta, that no law or decree, when once it had passed the royal assent, could be repealed or recalled, no judgment vacated, no attainder reversed, Dan. vi. 15. which is so far from speaking the wisdom, and honour of the Medes and Persians, that really it speaks their pride and folly, and consequently their shame. It is ridiculous in itself for any man, or company of men, to pretend such an infallibility of wisdom, as to foresee all the consequences of what they decree, and therefore it is unjust and injurious to mankind, to claim such a supremacy of power, as to make their decrees irrevocable, whether the consequences prove good or bad. This favours of that old presumption which ruined us all, we will be as gods. Much more prudent is that proviso of our constitution, that no law can by any words or sanctions whatsoever be made unrepealable, no more than any estate unalienable. Cujus est instruere, ejus est destruere. It is God's prerogative not to repent, and to say what can never be altered or unaid.

2. Yet he found an expedient to undo the device of Haman, and defeat his design, by signing and publishing another decree, to authorize the Jews to stand upon their defence, vim vi repellere, & invasorem occidere. And this would be their effectual security. The king shews them that he had enough already to convince them, that he had a concern for the Jewish nation, for he had ordered his favourite to be hanged, because he laid his hand upon the Jews, ver. 7. And therefore he would do the utmost he could to protect them; and leaves it as fully with Esther and Mordecai, to use his name and power for their deliverance, as before he had left it with Haman, to use his name and power for their destruction, write for the Jews as it liketh you, ver. 8. saving only the honour of our constitution. Let the mischief be put away as effectually as may be without reversing the letters.

The secretaries of state were ordered to attend, to draw up this edict, on the twenty-third day of the third month, ver. 9. about two months after the promulgation of the former, but nine months before the time set for its execution: it was to be drawn up and published in the respective languages of all the provinces: shall the subjects of an earthly prince, have his decrees in a language they understand, and shall God's oracles and law be locked up from his servants in an unknown tongue! It was to be directed to the proper officers of every province, both to the justices of peace, and to the deputy-lieutenants. It was to be carefully dispersed throughout all the king's dominions, and true copies sent by express to all the provinces.

The purport of this decree, was to commission the Jews upon the day which was appointed for their destruction, to draw together in a body for their own defence. And, (1.) To stand for their life, that whoever assaulted them, it might be at their peril. (2.) They might not only act defensively, but might destroy and slay, and cause to perish all the power of the people that would assault them, men, women, and children, ver. 11. and thus to avenge themselves



*selves on their enemies*, ver. 13. and if they pleased to enrich themselves by their enemies, for they were empowered to take the spoil of them for a prey. Now, 1. This shewed his kindness to the Jews, and sufficiently provided for their safety, for the latter decree would be looked upon as an implicit revocation of the former, tho' not express. But, 2. It shews the absurdity of that branch of their constitution, that none of the king's edicts might be repealed, for it laid the king here under a necessity of enacting a civil war in his own dominions, between the Jews and their enemies, so that both sides took up arms by his authority, and yet against his authority. No better could come of mens pretending to be wise above what is given them. Great expedition was used in dispersing this decree, the king himself being in pain, lest it should come too late, and any mischief should be done to the Jews, by virtue of the former decree, before the notice of this arrived: It was therefore by the king's commandment, as well as Mordecai's, that the messengers were hasted and pressed on, ver. 14. and had swift beasts provided them, ver. 10. It was not a time to trifle, when so many lives were in danger.

15. ¶ And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king, in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen, and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad: 16. The Jews had light and gladness, and joy, and honour. 17. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day: and many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

It was but a few days ago, that we had Mordecai in sackcloth, and all the Jews in sorrow, but here is a blessed change, Mordecai in purple, and all the Jews in joy. See *Psal. xxx. 5, 11, 12.*

1. Mordecai in purple, ver. 15. Having obtained an order for the relief of all the Jews, he was easy, parted with his mourning weeds, and put on the royal apparel which either belonged to his place, or which the king appointed him as a favourite. His robes were rich, blue and white, of fine linen and purple; so was his coronet, it was of gold. These are things not worth taking notice of, but as they were marks of the king's favour, and that the fruit of God's favour to his church. It is well with a land, when the ensigns of dignity are made the ornaments of serious piety; the city Shushan was sensible of its advantage by the preferment of Mordecai, and therefore rejoiced and was glad, not only pleased in general with the advancement of virtue, but promising themselves in particular better times, now so good a man was intrusted with power. Haman was hanged, and *when the wicked perish there is shouting*, Prov. xi. 10. Mordecai was preferred, and *when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice*.

2. The Jews in joy, ver. 16, 17. The Jews that a while ago were under a dark cloud, dejected and disgraced, now had light and gladness, joy and honour, a feast and a good day; if they had not been threatned, and in distress, they had not had occasion for this extraordinary joy. Therefore God's people are made to *sow in tears*, sometimes that they may *reap in* so much the more joy. The suddenness and strangeness of the turn of affairs in their favours, added much to their joy; they were *like them that dream*; then was their mouth filled with laughter, *Psal. cxxvi. 1, 2.*

One good effect of this deliverance was, that many of the people of the land, that were considerate, sober, and well inclined, became Jews, were proselyted to the Jewish religion, renounced idolatry, and worshipped the true God only. Haman thought to extirpate the Jews, but it proves in the issue, that their numbers are greatly increased, and many added to the church. Observe, *When the Jews had joy and gladness, then many of the people of the land became Jews*; the holy cheerfulness of those that profess religion, is a great ornament to their profession, and will invite and encourage others to be religious. The reason here given why so many became Jews at this time, is because *the fear of the Jews fell upon them*. When they observed how wonderfully the divine providence had owned them, and wrought for them in this critical juncture. (1.) They thought them great, and those happy that were among them, and therefore they came over to them, as was foretold, *Zech. viii. 23. We will go with you, for we have heard, we have seen, that God is with you, the shield of your help, and the sword of your excellency*, Deut. xxxiii. 29. When the church prospers, and is smiled upon, many will come in to it, that will be shy of it, when it is in trouble. (2.) They thought them formidable, and those miserable that were against them. They plainly saw in Haman's fate, that if any offered injury to the Jews, it was at their peril, and therefore for their own security, they joined themselves to them. It is folly to think of contending with the God of Israel, and therefore it is wisdom to think of submitting to him.

## C H A P. IX.

*We left two royal edicts in force, both given at the court of Shushan, one bearing date the thirteenth day of the first month, appointing, that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month then next ensuing, all the Jews should be killed; and another, bearing date the twenty third day of the third month, empowering the Jews, on the day appointed for their slaughter, to draw the sword in their own defence, and make their part good against their enemies, as well as they could. Great expectation there was, no doubt, of this day, and the issue of it. The Jews cause was to be tried by battle, and the day fixed for the combat by authority. Their enemies resolved not to lose the advantages given them by the first edict, in hope to over-power them by numbers; the Jews relied on the goodness of their God, and justice of their cause, and resolved to make their utmost efforts against their enemies. The day comes at length, and here we are told (1.) What a glorious day it was that year to the Jews, and the two days following; a day of victory and triumph, both in the city Shushan, and in all the rest of the king's provinces, ver. 1—19. (2.) What a memorable day it was made to posterity, by an annual feast, in commemoration of this great deliverance, called the feast of Purim, ver. 20—32.*

1. **N**OW in the twelfth month (that is the month Adar) on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them) 2. The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt; and no man could withstand them: for the fear of them fell upon all people. 3. And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews: because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. 4. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. 5. Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. 6. And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. 7. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, 8. And Poratha, and Adaliah, and Aridatha, 9. And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, 10. The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand. 11. On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace, was brought before the king. 12. ¶ And the king said unto Esther the queen, the Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done. 13. Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan, to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. 14. And the king commanded it so to be done; and the decree was given at Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons. 15. For the Jews that were in Shushan, gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand. 16. But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces, gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand; but they laid not their hands on the prey. 17. On the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day of the same, rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 18. But the Jews that were at Shushan, assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 19. Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made



made the fourteenth day of the month Adar, a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

We have here a decisive battle fought between the Jews, and their enemies, in which the Jews were victorious. Neither side were surprized, for both had notice of it long enough before, so that it was a fair trial of skill between them. Nor could either side call the other rebels, for they were both supported by the royal authority.

1. The enemies of the Jews were the aggressors. They hoped notwithstanding the latter edict, *to have power over them*, by virtue of the former, *ver. 1.* and made assaults upon them accordingly; formed themselves into bodies, and joined in confederacy against them, *to seek their hurt*, *ver. 2.* The Chaldee paraphrase saith, none appeared against the Jews but Amalekites only, who were infatuated, and had their hearts hardened, as Pharaoh's against Israel, to take up arms to their own destruction. Some had such an inveterate implacable malice against the Jews, that Haman's fall and Mordecai's advancement, instead of convincing them, did but exasperate them, and make them more outrageous and resolute to cut all their throats. The sons of Haman, particularly, vowed to avenge their father's death, and pursue his designs, which they call noble and brave, whatever hazards they run; and a strong party they had formed both in Shushan and in the provinces, in order herunto. Fight they would, tho' they plainly saw providence fight against them, and thus they were infatuated to their own destruction. If they would have sitten still, and attempted nothing against the people of God, not a hair of their head had fallen to the ground; but they cannot persuade themselves to do that, they must be meddling, tho' it prove to their own ruin; and roll a burthensome stone, which will return upon them.

2. But the Jews were the conquerors. That very day, when the king's decree for their destruction was to be put in execution, and which the enemies thought would have been their day, proved *God's day*, (Psalm xxxvii. 13.) it was *turned to the contrary* of what was expected, and *the Jews had rule over them that hated them*, *ver. 1.* We are here told,

1. What the Jews did for themselves, *ver. 2.* *they gathered themselves together in their cities*, embodied, and stood upon their defence, offering violence to none, but bidding defiance to all. If they had not had an edict to warrant them, they durst not have done it, but being so supported, they strove lawfully. Had they acted separately, each family apart, they had been an easy prey to their enemies, but acting in concert, and gathering together in their cities, they strengthened one another, and durst face their enemies. *Vis unita fortior*. Those that write of the state of the Jews at this day, give this as the reason why, tho' they are very numerous in many parts and rich, yet they are so despicable, because they are generally so selfish, that they cannot incorporate, and being under the curse of dispersion, cannot unite, nor (as here) *gather together*, for if they could, they might with their numbers and wealth, threaten the most potent states.

2. What the rulers of the provinces did for them, under the influence of Mordecai. All the officers of the king, who by the bloody edict were ordered to help forward their destruction, *chap. iii. 12, 13.* conformed themselves to the latter edict (which being an estoppel against an estoppel, had set the matter at large, and left them at liberty to observe which they pleased) and *helped the Jews*, which turned the scale on their side, *ver. 3.* The provinces would generally do as the rulers of the provinces inclined, and therefore their favouring the Jews would greatly further them. But why did they help them? not because they had any kindness for them, but because *the fear of Mordecai fell upon them*, he having manifestly the countenance both of God and the king. They all saw it their interest to help Mordecai's friends, because he was not only great in the king's house, and caressed by the courtiers, as many are, who have no intrinsic worth to support their reputation, but his fame for wisdom and virtue went out from thence throughout all the provinces, in all places he was cried up as a great man; he was looked upon also as a thriving man, and one that *waxed greater and greater*, *ver. 4.* And therefore, for fear of him, all the king's officers helped the Jews. Great men may by their influence do a great deal of good, many that fear not God, will stand in awe of them.

3. What God did for them; he struck *all people* with a *fear of them*, *ver. 2.* as the Canaanites were made afraid of Israel, *Josh. ii. 9.—v. 1.* so that tho' they had so much hardness as to assault them, yet they had not courage to prosecute the assault. Their hearts failed them when they came to engage, and *none of the men of might could find their hands*.

4. What execution they did hereupon, *no man could withstand them*, *ver. 2.* But *they did what they would to those that hated them*, *ver. 5.* So strangely were the Jews strengthened and spirited, and their enemies weakened and dispirited, that none of those who had marked themselves for their destruction escaped, but they *smote them with the stroke of the sword*. Particularly,

(1.) On the thirteenth day of the month Adar, they slew in the city Shushan five hundred men, *ver. 6.* and the *ten sons of*

*Haman*, *ver. 10.* The Jews, when on the feast of Purim, they read this book of Esther, oblige themselves to read the names of Haman's ten sons all in one breath, without any pause, because they say they were all killed together, and all gave up the ghost just in the same moment. *Buxt. Synag. Jud. c. 24.* And the Chaldee paraphrase saith, that when these ten were slain, Zeresh, with seventy more of his children, escaped, and afterwards begged their bread from door to door.

(2.) On the fourteenth day they slew in Shushan three hundred more, who had escaped the sword on the former day of execution, *ver. 15.* This Esther obtained leave of the king for them to do, for the greater terror of their enemies, and the utter crushing of that malignant party of men. The king had taken account of the numbers that were put to the sword the first day, *ver. 11.* and told Esther, *ver. 12.* and asked her what more she desired: Nothing, saith she, but commission to do such another day's work: Esther surely was none of the blood-thirsty, none of those that delight in slaughter, but she had some very good reasons that moved her to make this request. She also desired that the dead bodies of Haman's ten sons, might be hanged up on the gallows on which their father was hanged for the greater disgrace of the family, and terror of the party, *ver. 13.* and it was done accordingly, *ver. 14.* and it is supposed they were hanged in chains, and left hanging for some time.

(3.) The Jews in the country kept to their orders, and slew no more of their enemies than what were slain the thirteenth day, which were in all among all the provinces seventy five thousand, *ver. 16.* If all these were Amalekites (as the Jews say) surely now it was, that the remembrance of Amalek was utterly put out, *Exod. xvii. 14.* However, that which justifies them in the execution of so many is, that they did it in their own just and necessary defence; they *stood for their lives*; authorized to do so by the law of self-preservation, as well as by the king's decree.

(4.) In these several executions, it is taken notice of, that on the prey they laid not their hand, *ver. 10, 15, 16.* The king's commission had warranted them to *take the spoil* of their enemies *for a prey*, *chap. viii. 11.* and a fair opportunity they had of enriching themselves with it; if Haman's party had prevailed, no doubt they would have made use of their authority to seize the goods and estates of the Jews, *chap. iii. 13.* But the Jews would not do so by them, (1.) That they might, to the honour of their religion, evidence a holy and generous contempt of worldly wealth, in imitation of their father Abraham, who scorned to enrich himself with the spoils of Sodom. (2.) That they might make it to appear, they aimed at nothing but their own preservation, and used their interest at court for the saving of their lives, not for the raising of their estates. (3.) Their commission empowered them to destroy the families of their enemies, even *the little ones*, and *the women*, *chap. viii. 11.* But their humanity forbade them to do that, tho' that was designed against them; they slew none but those they found in arms; and therefore they did not take the spoil, but left it to the women and little ones whom they spared for their subsistence, otherwise as good slay them as starve them, take away their lives, as to take away their livelihoods. Herein they acted with a consideration and compassion well worthy imitation.

5. What a satisfaction they had in their deliverance; the Jews in the country cleared themselves of their enemies on the thirteenth day of the month, and they rested on the fourteenth day, (*ver. 17.*) and made that a thanksgiving-day, *ver. 19.* The Jews in Shushan, the royal city, took two days for their military execution, so that they rested on the fifteenth day, and made that their thanksgiving-day, *ver. 18.* Both of them celebrated their festival the very day after they had finished their work, and gained their point. When we have received signal mercies from God, we ought to be quick and speedy in making our thankful returns to him, while the mercy is fresh, and the impressions of it most sensible.

20. ¶ And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that *were* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, *both nigh and far*, 21. To stablish *this* among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same yearly: 22. As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. 23. And the Jews, undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them, 24. Because Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot) to consume them, and to destroy them: 25. But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters, that his wicked device



device which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26. Wherefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur: therefore for all the words of this letter, and of *that* which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them, 27. The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joyned themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their *appointed* time every year: 28. And that these days *should be* remembred and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed. 29. Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim. 30. And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth: 31. To confirm these days of Purim in their times *appointed*, according as Mordecai the Jew, and Esther the queen had enjoyned them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry. 32. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

We may well imagine how much affected Mordecai and Esther were with the triumphs of the Jews, over their enemies, and how they saw the issue of that decisive day, with a satisfaction proportionable to the care and concern with which they expected it. How were their hearts enlarged with joy in God and his salvation, and what new songs of praise were put into their mouths! But here we are told what course they took to spread the knowledge of it among their people, and to perpetuate the remembrance of it to posterity, for the honour of God, and the encouragement of his people to trust in him at all times.

1. The history was written, and copies of it dispersed among all the Jews in all the provinces of the empire, *both nigh and far*, ver. 20. They all knew something of the story, being nearly concerned in it, were by the first edict made sensible of their danger, and by the second of their deliverance, but how this amazing turn was given, they could not tell, Mordecai therefore *wrote these things*. And if this book be the same that he wrote, as many think it is, I cannot but observe what a difference there is between Mordecai's style and Nehemiah's; Nehemiah at every turn takes notice of the divine providence, and the *good hand of his God* upon him, which is very proper to stir up devout affections in the minds of his readers; but Mordecai never so much as mentions the name of God in the whole story. Nehemiah wrote his book at Jerusalem, where religion was in fashion, and an air of it appeared on mens common conversation; Mordecai wrote his at Shushan the palace, where policy reigned more than piety, and he wrote according to the genius of the place. Even those that have the root of the matter in them, are apt to lose the favour of religion, and let their leaf wither when they converse wholly with those that have little religion. Commend me to Nehemiah's way of writing, that I would imitate, and yet learn from Mordecai's, that men may be truly devout, tho' they do not abound in the shews and expressions of devotion; and therefore we must not judge or despise our brethren. But because there is so little of the language of Canaan in this book, many think it was not written by Mordecai, but was an extract out of the journals of the kings of Persia, giving an account of the matter of fact, which the Jews themselves knew how to comment upon.

2. A festival was instituted, to be observed yearly from generation to generation, by the Jews, in remembrance of this wonderful work which God wrought for them; that *the children which should be born* might know it, and *declare it to their children*, that they might set their hope in God, Psal. lxxviii. 6, 7. It would be for the honour of God as the protector of his people, and the honour of Israel as the care of heaven, a confirmation of the fidelity of God's covenant, an invitation to strangers to come into the bonds of it, and an encouragement to God's own people cheerfully to depend upon him, and his wisdom, power and goodness, in the greatest straits. Posterity would reap the benefit of this deliverance, and therefore ought to celebrate the memorial of it.

Now concerning this festival we are here told,

1. When it was observed. Every year on *the fourteenth and fifteenth day of the twelfth month*, just a month before the passover, ver. 21. Thus the first month and the last month of the year, kept in remembrance the months that were past, even *the days when God preserved them*. They kept two days together as thanksgiving-days, and did not think that too much to spend in praising

God. Let us not be niggardly in our returns of praise to him, who bestows his favours so liberally upon us. Observe, They did not keep the day when they fought, but the days when they rested; on the fourteenth day the country Jews rested, and on the fifteenth those in Shushan, and both those they kept. The sabbath was appointed not on the day that God *finished his work*, but the day he *rested from it*. The modern Jews observe the thirteenth day, the day appointed for their destruction as a fasting day, grounding it on, ver. 31. *the matters of their fastings and cry*. But that refers to what was in the day of their distress, chap. iv. 3, 16. which was not to be continued, when God had turned their fasts into *joy and gladness*, Zech. viii. 19.

2. How it was called. *The feast of Purim*. ver. 26. from Pur, a Persian word, which signifies a lot, because Haman had by lot determined this to be the time of the Jews destruction, but the Lord, at whose disposal the lot is, had determined it to be the time of their triumph. The name of this festival would mind them of the sovereign dominion of the God of Israel, who served his own purposes by the foolish superstitions of the heathen, and outwitted the *monthly prognosticators in their own craft*, Isa. xlvii. 13. *frustrating the tokens of the liars, and making the diviners mad*, Isa. xlv. 25, 26.

3. By whom it was instituted and enacted. It was not a divine institution, and therefore is not called a *holy day*, but a human appointment by which it was made a good day, ver. 19, 22. (1.) The Jews ordained it, and took it upon themselves, ver. 27. *voluntarily undertook to do as they began*, ver. 23. They obliged themselves to it by common consent. (2.) Mordecai and Esther confirmed their resolve, that it might be the more binding to posterity, and might come well recommended by those great names. They wrote, (1.) *With all authority*, ver. 29. as well they might, Esther being queen, and Mordecai prime minister of state. It is well when those who are in authority, use it to authorize that which is good. (2.) *With words of peace and truth*; tho' they wrote with authority, they wrote with tenderness, not imperious, not imposing, but in such language the council at Jerusalem use in their decree, Acts xv. 29. *if ye do so and so, ye shall do well, fare ye well*. Such was the style of these letters, or such the salutation or valediction of them, *peace and truth be with you*.

4. By whom it was to be observed; by *all the Jews*, and by *their seed*, and by all such as *joined themselves to them*, ver. 21. The observation of this feast was to be both universal and perpetual; the proselytes must observe it in token of their sincere affection to the Jewish nation, and their having twisted interests with them. A concurrence in joys and praises is one branch of the communion of saints.

5. Why it was to be observed. That the memorial of the great things God had done for his church might never *perish from their seed*, ver. 28. God doth not work wonders for a day, but to be had in everlasting remembrance. *What he doth shall be for ever*, and therefore should for ever be had in mind, Eccl. iii. 14. In this affair they would remember, (1.) Haman's ill practices against the church, to his perpetual reproach, ver. 24. *Because he had devised against the Jews to destroy them*. Let this be kept in mind, that God's people may never be secure, while they have such malicious enemies, on whom they ought to have a jealous eye; their enemies aim at no less than their destruction, on God therefore let them depend for salvation. (2.) Esther's good services to the church, to her immortal honour. When Esther, in peril of her life, *came before the king*, he repealed the edict, ver. 25. This also must be remembred that wherever this feast should be kept, and this history read in explication of it, this which she did might be *told for a memorial* of her. Good deeds done for the Israel of God, ought to be remembred for the encouragement of others to do the like. God will not forget them, and therefore we must not. (3.) Their own prayers, and the answers given to them, ver. 31. *the matters of their fastings and their cry*. The more cries we have offered up in our trouble, and the more prayers for deliverance, the more we are obliged to be thankful to God for deliverance. *Call upon me in the time of trouble, and then offer to God thanksgiving*.

6. How it was to be observed. And of this let us see,

1. What was here enjoined that was very good; that they should make it, (1.) A day of cheerfulness. *A day of feasting and joy*, ver. 22. And *a feast was made for laughter*, Eccl. x. 19. When God gives us cause to rejoice, why should we not express our joy? (2.) A day of generosity; *sending portions one to another*, in token of their pleasantness, and mutual respect, and their being knit by this and other publick common dangers and deliverances so much the closer to each other in love. Friends have their goods in common. (3.) A day of charity. *Sending gifts to the poor*. It is not to our kinsmen, and rich neighbours only, that we are to send tokens, but to *the poor and the maimed*, Luke xiv. 12, 13. They that have received mercy, must, in token of their gratitude, shew mercy, and there never wants occasion, for the poor we have always with us. Thanksgiving and almsgiving should go together, that when we are rejoicing and blessing God, the heart of the poor may rejoice with us, and their loins may bless us.

2. What was added to this which was much better. They always at the feast read the whole story over in the synagogue each



each day, and put up three prayers to God, in the first of which they praise God for counting them worthy to attend this divine service. In the second, they thank him for the miraculous preservation of their ancestors; in the third, that they have lived to observe another festival in memory of it. So bishop Patrick.

3. What it is since degenerated to, which is much worse. Their own writers own, that this feast is commonly celebrated among them with gluttony and drunkenness, and excess of riot. Their Talmud saith expressly, that in the feast of Purim, a man should drink till he knows not the difference between *curst be Haman, and blessed be Mordecai*. See what the corrupt and wicked nature of man oft brings that to, which was at first well intended; here is a religious feast turned into a carnival, a perfect revels; as wakes among us. Nothing more purifies the heart, and adorns religion than holy joy, nothing more pollutes the heart and reproacheth religion, than carnal mirth and sensual pleasure. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*.

## C H A P. X.

*This is but a piece of a chapter. The rest of it beginning at ver. 4. with six chapters more, being found only in the Greek, are rejected as apocryphal. In these three verses, we have only some short hints, (1.) Concerning Ahasuerus in the throne, what a mighty prince he was, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Concerning Mordecai his favourite, what a mighty blessing he was to his people, ver. 2, 3.*

1. **A**ND the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea. 2. And all the acts of his power, and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? 3. For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

We are here told,

1. How great and powerful king Ahasuerus was.

He had a vast dominion, both in the continent and among the islands, from which he raised a vast revenue. Besides the usual customs which the kings of Persia exacted, *Ezra* iv. 13. he laid an additional tribute upon his subjects, to serve for some great occasion he had for money, *ver. 1. The king laid a tribute*. Happy is our island that pays no tribute but what is laid upon it by its representatives, and those of its own choosing, and is not squeezed or oppressed by an arbitrary power, as some of its neighbour nations are. Besides this instance of the grandeur of Ahasuerus, many more might be given, that were *acts of his power and of his might*, but they are not thought fit to be recorded here in the sacred story, which is confined to the Jews, and relates the affairs of other nations only as they fell in with their affairs, but they are *written in the Persian chronicles*, *ver. 2.*

which are long since lost, and buried in oblivion, while the sacred writings live, live in honour, and will till time shall be no more. When the *kingdom of men*, monarchs and their monarchies, are destroyed, and *their memorial is perished with them*, (*Psal. ix. 6.*) the kingdom of God among men, and the records of that kingdom, shall remain, and be *as the days of heaven*, *Dan. ii. 44.*

2. How great and good Mordecai was.

1. He was great, and it doth one good to see virtue and piety thus in honour. (1.) He was great with the king; next to him, as one he most delighted and confided in. Long had Mordecai sitten contentedly in the king's gate, and now at length he is advanced to the head-end of his council-board. Men of merit may for a time seem buried alive, but often by some means or other they are discovered and preferred at last. The declaration of the greatness to which the king advanced Mordecai, was *written in the chronicles of the kingdom*, as very memorable, and contributing to the great achievements of the king. He never did such acts of power, as he did when Mordecai was his right-hand. (2.) He was *great among the Jews*, *ver. 3.* not only great above them, more honourable than any of them, but great with them, dear to them, familiar with them, and much respected by them. So far were they from envying his preferment, that they rejoiced in it, and added to it, by giving him a commanding interest among them, and submitting all their affairs to his direction.

2. He was good, very good, for he did good; that made him truly great, and then his greatness gave him an opportunity of doing so much the more good. When the king advanced him (1.) He did not disown his people the Jews, nor was he ashamed of his relation to them, tho' they were strangers and captives, dispersed and despised. Still he wrote himself Mordecai the Jew, and therefore no doubt adhered to the Jews religion, by the observances of which he distinguished himself, and yet it was no balk to his preferment, nor looked upon as a blemish to him. (2.) He did not seek his own wealth, and the raising of an estate for himself and his family, which is the chief thing most aim at, when they get into great places at court, but he consulted the welfare of his people, and made it his business to advance that. His power, his wealth, and all his interest in the king and queen, he improved for the publick good. (3.) He did not only do good, but he did it in a humble condescending way, was easy of access, courteous and affable in his carriage, and spoke peace to all that made their application to him. Doing good works, is the best and chief thing expected from those that have wealth and power, but giving good words is also commendable, and makes the good deed the more acceptable. (4.) He did not side with any one party of his people against another, nor make some his favourites, while the rest were neglected and crushed, but whatever differences there were among them, he was a common father to them all, recommended himself to *the multitude of his brethren*, not despising the crowd, and spoke peace to *all their seed*, without distinction. Thus making himself acceptable by humility and beneficence, he was universally accepted, and gained the good word of all his brethren. Thanks be to God, such a government as this we are blessed with, which *seeks the welfare of our people, speaking peace to all their seed*, God continue it long, very long! And grant us under the happy protection and influence of it, to *live quiet and peaceable lives, in godliness, honesty, and charity*.





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O F T H E

Five Poetical B O O K S

O F T H E  
O L D T E S T A M E N T.

V I Z.

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W H E R E I N

Each CHAPTER is summed up in its CONTENTS; the sacred Text inserted at large in distinct paragraphs; each paragraph reduced to its proper heads; the sense given, and largely illustrated:

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Practical Remarks and Observations.

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By *MATTHEW . HENRY*, late Minister of the Gospel  
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# T H E P R E F A C E T O T H E P O E T I C A L B O O K S.

**T**H E S E five books of scripture, which I have here endeavoured, according to the measure of the gift given to me, to explain and improve, for the use of those who desire to read them not only with understanding, but to their edification, tho' they are of the same divine original design and authority with those that went before, yet upon some accounts are of a very different nature from them, and from the rest of the sacred writings: such variety of methods hath Infinite Wisdom seen fit to take, in conveying the light of divine revelation to the children of men, that this heavenly food might have (as the Jews say of the manna) something in it agreeable to every palate, and suited to every constitution. And if every eye be not thus opened, every mouth will be stopped; and such as perish in their ignorance will be left without excuse. We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned unto you, and you have not lamented, *Matth. xi. 17.*

1. The books of scripture have hitherto been, for the most part, very plain and easy narratives of matter of fact, which he that runs may read, and understand, and which are milk for babes, such as they can receive, and digest, and both entertain and nourish themselves with: the waters of the sanctuary have hitherto been but to the ankles or to the knees, such as a lamb might wade in, to drink of and wash in; but here we are advanced into a higher form in God's school, and have books put into our hands wherein are many things dark and hard to be understood, which we do not apprehend the meaning of so suddenly and so certainly as we could wish; the study whereof requires a more close application of mind, a greater intenseness of thought, and the accomplishing of a diligent search; which yet the treasure hid in them, when it is found, will abundantly recompense. The waters of the sanctuary are here to the loins, and as still we go forward we shall find the waters still risen in the prophetic books, waters to swim in, *Ezek. xlvii. 3, 4, 5.* not fordable, nor otherwise to be passed over; depths in which an elephant will not find footing; strong meat for strong men. The same method is observable in the New Testament, where we find the plain history of Christ and his gospel placed first in the Evangelists, and the Acts of the Apostles, then the mystery of both in the Epistles, which are more difficult to be understood; and lastly, the prophecies of things to come in the Apocalyptick visions.

This method so exactly observed in both the Testaments, directs us in what order to proceed both in studying the things of God ourselves, and in teaching them to others; we must go in the order that the scripture doth; and where can we expect to find a better method of divinity, and a better method of preaching?

(1.) We must begin with those things that are most plain and easy, as, blessed be God, those things are which are most necessary to salvation, and of the greatest use. We must lay our foundation firm, in a sound experimental knowledge of the principles of religion, and then the superstructure will be well reared, and stand firm. It is not safe to launch out into the deep at first, nor to venture into points difficult and controverted, until we have first thoroughly digested the elements of the oracles of God, and turned them in succum & sanguinem. Those that begin their Bible at the wrong end, commonly use their knowledge of it the wrong way.

And in training up others we must be sure to ground them well at first in those truths of God which are plain, and in some measure level to their capacity, which we find they take and relish, and know how to make use of, and not amuse those that are weak with things above them, things of doubtful disputation, which they cannot apprehend any certainty of, or advantage by. Our Lord Jesus spoke the word, to the people as they were able to hear it, *Mark iv. 33.* and had many things to say to his disciples which he did not say, because as yet they could not bear them, *John xvi. 12, 13.* And those whom St Paul could not speak to as unto spiritual, tho' he blamed them for their backwardness, yet he accommodated himself to their weakness, and spoke to them as unto babes in Christ, *i Cor. iii. 1, 2.*

(2.) Yet we must not rest in these things; we must not be always children that have need of milk, but nourished up with that, and gaining strength, we must go on to perfection, *Heb. vi. 1.* that having by reason of use, our spiritual senses exercised, we may come to full age, and put away childish things, and forgetting the things which are behind, *Heb. v. 14. i. e.* so well remembering them, *Phil. iii. 13.* that we need not be still conning them, as those that are ever learning, the same lesson, we may reach forth to the things which are before. Tho' we must never think to learn above our Bible as long as we are here in this world, yet we must still be getting forward in it. Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain, now turn you and take your journey onward in the wilderness towards Canaan: our motto must be plus ultra. And then shall we know, if thus, by regular steps, *Hos. vi. 3.* we follow on to know the Lord, and what the mind of the Lord is.



# The P R E F A C E

2. The books of scripture have hitherto been mostly historical, but now the matter is of another nature; it is doctrinal and devotional, preaching and praying; and in this way of writing, as well as in the former, a great deal of excellent knowledge is conveyed, and which serves very valuable purposes. It will be of good use to know not only what others did that went before us, and how they fared, but what their notions and sentiments were, what their thoughts and affections were; that we may with the help of them, form our minds aright.

Plutarch's *Morals* are reputed as useful a treasure in the common-wealth of learning, as Plutarch's *Lives*; and the wise disquisitions and discourses of the philosophers, as the records of the historians; nor is this divine philosophy (if I may so call it) which we have in these books, less needful, or less serviceable, to the Church than the sacred history was. Blessed be God for both.

3. The Jews make these books to be given by a divine inspiration somewhat different from that both of Moses and the prophets. They divided the books of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the כתובים the writings; which Epiphanius emphatically translates Γεγραμμαι, things written, and these books are more commonly called among the Greeks Ἁγιογγραφα, holy writings: the Jews attribute them to that distinct kind of inspiration which they call רוח הקודש the holy Spirit. Moses they supposed to write by the Spirit in a way above all the other prophets, for with him God spake mouth to mouth even apparently knew him, Numb. xii. 8. i. e. conversed with him face to face: Deut. xxxiv. 10. he was made partaker of divine revelation (as Maimonides distinguisheth, De Fund. Legis, c. 7.) per vigiliam\*, whereas God manifesteth himself to all the other prophets in a dream, or vision: and he adds, that Moses understood the words of prophecy without any perturbation or astonishment of mind; whereas the other prophets commonly fainted and were troubled. But the writers of the Hagiographa, they suppose to be inspired in a degree somewhat below that of the other prophets, and to receive divine revelation not as they did, not by dreams, and visions, and voices, but (as Maimonides describes it, More Nevochim, part ii. chap. xlv.) they perceived some power to rise within them, and rest upon them, which urged and enabled them to write or speak far above their own natural ability in psalms, or hymns, or in history, or in rules of good living, still enjoying the ordinary vigour and use of their senses. Let David himself describe it. The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue: the God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spake to me; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3. which gives such a magnificent account of the inspiration by which David wrote, that I see not why it should be made inferior to that of the other prophets, for David is expressly called a prophet, Acts ii. 30.

But since our hand is in with the Jewish masters, let us see what books they account Hagiographa. These five that are now before us come without dispute into the rank of sacred writers, and the book of the Lamentations is not unfitly added to them: and indeed the Jews, when they would speak critically, reckon all those songs which we meet with in the Old Testament among the Hagiographa, for tho' they were penned by prophets, and under the direction of the Holy Ghost, yet because they were not the proper result of a visum propheticum, they were not strictly prophecy. But as to the Historical Books they distinguish; but I think it is a distinction without a difference. Some of them they assign to the prophets, calling them the prophetæ priores, viz. Joshua, Judges, the two books of the Kings; but others they rank among the Hagiographa, as the book of Ruth, (which yet is but an appendix to the book of Judges) the two books of Chronicles, with Ezra and Nehemiah, and the book of Esther, which the Rabbins have a great value for, and think it to be had in equal esteem with the law of Moses itself, shall last as long as it lasts and shall survive the writings of the Prophets. And lastly, they reckon the book of Daniel among the Hagiographa, † for which no reason can be given, since he was not inferior to any of the prophets in the gift of prophecy: and therefore the learned Mr Smith thinks that their placing him among the Hagiographical writers was fortuitous, and by mistake||.

Mr Smith in his Discourse before quoted, tho' he supposes this kind of divine inspiration to be more “ pacate and serene than that which was strictly called prophecy, not acting so much upon the imagination, “ but seating itself in the higher and purer faculties of the soul, yet shews that it manifested itself to be “ of a divine nature, not only as it always acted pious souls into strains of devotion, or moved them “ strangely to dictate matters of true piety and goodness, but as it came in abruptly upon the minds of “ those holy men, and transported them from that temper of mind they were in before: so that they per- “ ceived themselves captivated by the power of some higher light, than that which their own understanding “ commonly poured out upon them; and this (saith he) was a kind of vital form to that light of divine and “ sanctified reason which they are perpetually possessed of, and that constant frame of holiness and goodness “ which dwelt in their hallowed minds.” And we have reason to glorify the God of Israel who gave such power unto men, and hath here transmitted to us to the blessed products of that power.

4. The stile and compofure of these books is different from those that go before and those that follow: Our Saviour divides the books of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, Luke xxiv. 44. and thereby teacheth us to distinguish those books that are poetical, or metrical, from the law and the Prophets, and such are all these that are now before us, except Ecclesiastes, which yet having something restrained in its stile, may well enough be reckoned among them. They are books in verse, according to the ancient rules of versifying, tho' not according to the Greek and Latin Prosodias.

Some of the antients call these five books the second Pentateuch of the Old Testament†, five sacred volumes, which are as the satellites to the five books of the law of Moses. Gregory Nazianzen, (carm. 33. p. 98.)

\*\* calls these αἱ σιχηαὶ πέντε, the five metrical books, first Job, (so he reckons them up) then David, then the three of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, the Song, and Proverbs. Amphilocius, bishop at Iconium, in his Iambick Poem to Seleucus, reckons them up particularly, and calls them σιχηαὶ πέντε βιβλας; the five verse books. Epiphanius, lib. de ponder. & mensur. p. 533. πέντε σιχηαίς. And Cyril. Hieresol. Collect. 4. p. (mihi) 30. calls

\* See Mr Smith's Discourse on Prophecy, chap. xi.

|| Vid. Hottinger. Thesaur. Philol. lib. ii. cap. i. § 3.

\*\* Vid. Suicer. Thesaur. in σιχηαίς

† Hil. Megil. c. ii. § 11.

‡ Damascen's Orthod. Fid. l. iv. cap. 18.



calls these five books, *τὰ σιχναῖα*. Polychronius in his prologue to Job saith, that as those that are without call their tragedies and comedies *Ποιήματα*, so in sacred writ those books which are composed in Hebrew metre, (of which he reckons Job the first) we call *σιχναῖα Βιβλία*, books in verse, written *κατὰ σίχον*, according to order. What is written in metre or rithm, is so called from *μετρος* and *ἄριθμος*, because regulated by certain measures, or numbers of syllables, which please the ear with their smoothness and cadency, and so insinuate the matter the more movingly and powerfully into the fancy.

Sir William Temple †, in his essay upon poetry, thinks it is generally agreed to have been the first sort of writing that has been used in the world; nay, that in several nations poetical compositions preceded the very invention or usage of letters. The Spaniards (he saith) found in America many strains of poetry, and such as seemed to flow from a true poetick vein, before any letters were known in those regions. The same (saith he) is probable of the Scythians and Grecians: the oracles of Apollo were delivered in verse; so were those of the Sybils. And Tacitus saith, that the antient Germans had no annals or records but what were in verse. Homer and Hesiod wrote their poems (the very Alcoran of the Pagan Dæmonology) many ages before the appearing of any of the Greek philosophers or historians; and long before them, (if we may give credit to the antiquities of Greece) even before the days of David, Orpheus and Linus were celebrated poets and musicians in Greece; and at the same time Carmenta, the mother of Evander, who was the first that introduced letters among the natives of Greece, was so called à carmine, because she delivered herself in verse. And in such veneration was this way of writing among the antients, that their poets were called Vates, prophets, and their muses were deified.

But which is more certain and considerable, the most antient composition that we meet with in scripture, was the song of Moses at the Red-sea, Exod. xv. which we find before the very first mention of writing, for that occurs not until Exod. xvii. 14. when God bid Moses write a memorial of the war with Amalek. The first, and indeed the true and general, end of writing is the help of memory, and poetry doth in some measure answer that end, and even in the want of writing, much more with writing, helps to preserve the remembrance of antient things. The book of the wars of the Lord, (Numb. xxi. 14.) and the book of Jasher, (Josh. x. 13. 2 Sam. i. 18.) seem to have been both written in poetick measures.

Many sacred songs we meet with in the Old Testament, scattered both in the historical and prophetical books, penned on particular occasions; which, in the opinion of very competent judges, “ have in them as true and noble strains of poetry and picture, as are met with in any other language whatsoever, in spite of all disadvantages from translations into so different tongues, and common prose\*: nay, are nobler examples of the true sublime stile of poetry than any can be found in the Pagan writers: the images are so strong, the thoughts so great, the expressions so divine, and the figures so admirable, bold, and moving, that the wonderful manner of these writers is quite inimitable†.” It is fit that what is employed in the service of the sanctuary should be the best in its kind.

The books here put together are poetical; Job is an heroick poem; the book of Psalms a collection of divine odes or lyrics; Solomon's Song, a pastoral and an epithalamium: they are poetical and yet sacred and serious, grave and full of majesty. They have a poetick force and flame, without poetick fury and fiction, and strangely command and move the affections, without corrupting the imagination, or putting a cheat upon that; and while they gratify the ear, edify the mind, and profit the more by pleasing. It is therefore much to be lamented that so powerful an art which was at first consecrated to the honour of God, and hath been so often employed in his service, should be debauched as it has been, and is at this day, into the service of his enemies; that his corn, and wine, and oil, should be prepared for Baal.

5. As the manner of the composition of these books is excellent and very proper to engage the attention, move the affections, and fix them in the memory, so the matter is highly useful, and such as will be every way serviceable to us. They have in them the very sum and substance of religion, and what they contain is more fitted to our hand, and made ready for use, than any part of the Old Testament; upon which account, if we may be allowed to compare one star with another in the firmament of the scripture, these will be reckoned stars of the first magnitude.

All scripture is profitable, and this part of it in a special manner for instruction in doctrine, in devotion, and in the right ordering of the conversation. The book of Job directs us what we are to believe concerning God; the book of Psalms how we are to worship him, pay our homage to him, and maintain our communion with him. And then the book of the Proverbs very particularly shews how we are to govern ourselves in every turn of human life: thus shall the man of God, by a due attendance to these lights, be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work. And these are placed according to their natural order, as well as according to the order of time; for very fitly are we first led into the knowledge of God, our judgments rightly formed concerning him, and our mistakes rectified; and then instructed how to worship him, and to choose the things that please him.

We have here much of natural religion, its principles, its precepts, much of God, his infinite perfections, his relations to man, and his government both of the world and of the church: here is much of Christ, who is the spring, and soul, and centre of revealed religion, and whom both Job and David were eminent types of, and had clear and happy prospects of. We have here that which will be of use to enlighten our understandings, and to acquaint us more and more with the things of God, with the deep things of God; speculations to entertain the most contemplative, and discoveries to satisfy the most inquisitive, and increase the knowledge of those that are most knowing. Here is that also which with a divine light will bring into the soul the heat and influence of a divine fire, will kindle and enflame pious and devout affections, on which wings we may soar upwards, until we enter into the holiest. We may here be in the mount with God, to behold his beauty; and when we come down from that mount, if we retain (as we ought) the impressions of our devotion upon our spirits, and make conscience of doing that good which the Lord our God here

† Miscell. part 2.

\* Sir W. Temple, p. 329.

† Sir R. Blackmore's pref. to Job.



## The P R E F A C E, &c.

here requires of us, our faces shall shine before all with whom we converse, who shall take occasion from thence to glorify our Father which is in heaven, *Mat. v. 16.*

Thus great, thus noble, thus truly excellent, is the subject, and thus capable of being improved; which gives me the more reason to be ashamed of the meanness of my performance, that the comment breathes so little of the life and spirit of the text. We often wonder as those that are not at all affected with the great things of God, and have no taste or relish of them, because they know little of them: but perhaps we have more reason to wonder at our selves, that conversing so frequently, so intimately, with them, we are not more affected with them, so as even to be wholly taken up with them, and in continual transport of delight in the contemplation of them. We hope to be so shortly: in the mean time, tho' like the three disciples that were the witnesses of Christ's transfiguration upon the mount, we are but dull and sleepy, yet we can say, Master, it is good to be here; here let us make tabernacles. *Luk. ix. 32, 33.*

I have nothing here to boast of; nothing at all; but a great deal to be humbled for, that I have not come up to what I have aimed at, in respect of fulness and exactness: in the review of it I find many defects, and those that are critical, perhaps, will meet with some mistakes in it; but I have done it with what care I could, and desire to be thankful to God, who by his grace hath carry'd me on in his work thus far: let that grace have all the glory, *Phil. ii. 13.* which works in us both to will and to do whatever we will or do that is good, or serves any good purpose; and what is from God I trust shall be to him, shall be graciously accepted by him, according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not, and shall be of some use to his church; and what is from myself, that is, all the defects and amisses, shall I trust be favourably passed by and pardoned. That prayer of St Austin's is mine, Domine Deus, quæcunque dixi in his Libris de tuo, agnoscant & tui; & quæ de meo, & tu ignosce & tui.

I must beg leave likewise to own to the honour of our great Master, that I have found the work to be its own wages; and that the more we converse with the word of God, the more it is to us as the honey, and the honeycomb. *Psal. xix. 10.* In gathering some gleanings of this harvest for others, we may feast our selves, and when we are enabled by the grace of God to do so, we are best qualified to feed others. I was much pleased with a passage I lately met with of Erasmus, that great scholar and celebrated wit, in an epistle dedicatory before his book *De Ratione Concionandi*; where, as one weary of the world and the hurry of it, he expresseth an earnest desire to spend the rest of his days in secret communion with Jesus Christ, encouraged by his gracious invitation to those who labour and are heavy laden, to come unto him for rest, *Mat. xi. 28.* and this is that only which he thinks will yield him true satisfaction: I think his words worth transcribing, and such as deserve to be inserted among the testimonies of great men to serious godliness. Neque quicquam facile credat quàm miserè animus jamdudum affectet ab his laboribus in tranquillum otium secedere, quodque superest vitæ (superest autem vix brevis palmus sive pugilus) solum cum eo solo colloqui qui clamavit olim, (nec hodiè mutat vocem suam) venite ad me omnes qui laboratis, & onerati estis, ego reficiam vos; quandoquidem in tam turbulento, ne dicam furente sæculo, in tot molestiis quas vel ipsa tempora publicè invehunt, vel privatim adfert ætas ac valetudo, nihil reperio in quo mens mea libentiùs conquiescat quàm in hoc arcano colloquio. In the pleasing contemplation of the divine beauty and benignity we hope to spend a blessed eternity, and therefore in this work it is good to spend as much as may be of our time.

One volume more, containing the Prophetical books, will finish the Old Testament, if the Lord continue my life, and leisure, and ability of mind and body, for this work. It is begun, and I find it will be larger than any of the other volumes, and longer in the doing; but as God by his grace shall furnish me for it, and assist me in it, (without which grace I am nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing) it shall be carry'd on with all convenient speed; and sat citò, si sat benè. I desire the prayers of my friends, that God would minister seed to the sower, and bread to the eaters, *Isa. lv. 10.* that he would multiply the seed sown, and encrease the fruits of our righteousness; *2 Cor. ix. 10.* that he who sows, and they who reap, may rejoyce together, *Job. iv. 36.* and the great Lord of the harvest shall have the glory of all.

MATTHEW HENRY.

Chester, May  
13, 1710.



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A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

Of the BOOK of

J O B.

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*This book of Job stands by it self, is not connected with any other, and is therefore to be considered alone. Many copies of the Hebrew Bible place it after the book of Psalms, and some after the Proverbs, which perhaps has given occasion to some learned men to imagine it to be written by Isaiah, or some of the later prophets: But as the subject appears to have been much more antient, so we have no reason to think but the composure of the book was, and that therefore it is most fitly placed first in this collection of divine morals: also, being doctrinal, it is proper to precede and introduce the book of Psalms, which is devotional, and the book of Proverbs, which is practical; for how shall we worship or obey a God we know not? As to this book, (1.) We are sure, it is given by inspiration of God, tho' we are not certain who was the penman of it. The Jews, tho' no friends to Job, because he was a stranger to the common-wealth of Israel, yet as faithful conservators of the oracles of God committed to them, always retained this book in their sacred canon. The history is referred to by one apostle, James v. 11. and one passage, chap. v. 13. quoted by another apostle, with the usual form of quoting scripture, It is written, 1 Cor. iii. 19. It is the opinion of many of the antients, that this history was written by Moses himself in Midian, and delivered to his suffering brethren in Egypt, for their support and comfort under their burthens, and the encouragement of their hope that God would in due time deliver and enrich them, as he did this patient sufferer. Some conjecture that it was written originally in Arabick, and afterwards translated into Hebrew, for the use of the Jewish church, by Solomon, (saith Mons. Jurieu) or some other inspired writer. It seems most probable to me that Elihu was the penman of it, at least of the discourses, because chap. xxxii. 15, 16. he mingles the words of an historian with those of a disputant: but Moses perhaps wrote the two first chapters and the last, to give light to the discourses, for in them God is frequently called Jehovah, but not in all the discourses, except once, chap. xii. 9. and that name was but little known to the patriarchs before Moses, Exod. vi. 3. If Job wrote it himself, some of the Jewish writers themselves own him a prophet among the Gentiles: If Elihu, we find he had a spirit of prophecy, which filled him with matter, and constrained him, chap. xxxii. 18.*

*(2.) We are sure, it is for the substance of it a true history, and not a romance, tho' the dialogues be poetical. No doubt there was such a man as Job, the prophet Ezekiel names him with Noab and Daniel, Ezek. xiv. 14. The narrative we have here of his prosperity and piety, his strange afflictions and exemplary patience, the substance of his conferences with his friends, and God's discourse with him out of the whirlwind, with his return at length to a very prosperous condition, no doubt is exactly true, tho' the inspired penman be allowed the usual liberty of putting the matter, of which Job and his friends discoursed, into his own words.*

*(3.) We are sure, it is very antient, tho' we cannot fix the precise time either when Job lived, or when the book was written. So many, so evident are its hoary hairs, the marks of its antiquity, that we have reason to think it of equal date with the book of Genesis it self, and that holy Job was co-temporary with Isaac and Jacob: tho' not co-heir with them of the promise of the earthly Canaan, yet a joint-expectant with them of the better country, that is, the heavenly. Probably, he was of the posterity of Nabor, Abraham's brother, whose first-born was Uz, Gen. xxii. 21. and in whose family religion was for some ages kept up, as appears, Gen. xxxi. 53. where God is called not only the God of Abraham, but the God of Nabor. He lived before the age of man was shortened to 70, or 80, as it was in Moses's time; before sacrifices were confined to one altar; before the general apostasy of the nations from the knowledge and worship of the true God, and while yet there is no other*

*idolatry*



idolatry known but only the worship of the sun and moon, and that punished by the Judges, chap. xxxi. 26, 28. He lived while God was known by the name of God Almighty, more than by the name of Jehovah, for he is called Shaddai, the Almighty, above thirty times in this book: he lived while divine knowledge was conveyed, not by writing, but by tradition, for to that appeals are here made, chap. viii. 8.—xxi. 29.—xv. 18.—v. 1. And we have therefore reason to think he lived before Moses, because here is no mention at all of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, or the giving of the law. There is indeed one passage which might be made to allude to the drowning of Pharaoh, chap. xxvi. 12. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through Rahab; which name Egypt is very frequently called by in scripture, as Psal. lxxxvii. 4.—lxxxix. 10. Isa. li. 9. But that may as well refer to the proud waves of the sea. We conclude therefore that we are here got back to the patriarchal age, and besides its authority, we receive this book with veneration for its antiquity.

(4.) We are sure, it is of great use to the church, and to every good christian, tho' there are many passages in it dark and hard to be understood. We cannot perhaps be confident of the true meaning of every Arabick word and phrase we meet with in it. It is a book that finds a great deal of work for the critics; but enough is plain to make the whole profitable, and it was all written for our learning. This noble poem presents to us, in very clear and lively characters, these five things among others. 1. A monument of primitive theology. The first and great principles of the light of nature, on which natural religion is founded, are here, in a warm, and long, and learned, dispute, not only taken for granted on all sides, and not the least doubt made of them, but by common consent plainly laid down as eternal truths, illustrated and urged as affecting commanding truths. Was ever the being of God, his glorious attributes and perfections, his unsearchable wisdom, his irresistible power, his unconceivable glory, his inflexible justice, and his incontestible sovereignty discoursed of with more clearness, fulness, reverence, and divine eloquence, than in this book? The creation of the world, and the government of it are here admirably described, not as matters of nice speculation, but as laying most powerful obligations upon us to fear and serve, to submit to and trust in, our Creator, owner, Lord, and ruler. Moral good and evil, virtue and vice, were never drawn more to the life, the beauty of the one and the deformity of the other, than in this book; nor the inviolable rule of God's judgment more plainly laid down, that happy are the righteous, it shall be well with them, and wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with them. These are not questions of the schools to keep the learned world in action, nor engines of state to keep the unlearned world in awe; no, it appears by this book they are sacred truths of undoubted certainty, and which all the wise and sober part of mankind have in every age subscribed and submitted to. (2.) It presents us with a specimen of Gentile piety. This great saint descended either not from Abraham, but Nabor, or if from Abraham, not from Isaac, but from one of the sons of the concubines, that were sent into the east-country, Gen. xxv. 6. Or if from Isaac, yet not from Jacob, but Esau; so that he was out of the pale of the covenant of peculiarity, no Israelite, no proselyte, and yet none like him for religion, nor such a favourite of heaven upon this earth. It was a truth therefore before St Peter perceived it, that in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted of him, Acts x. 35. There were children of God scattered abroad, (Job. xi. 53.) besides the incorporated children of the kingdom, Mat. viii. 11, 12. (3.) It presents us with an exposition of the book of providence, and a clear and satisfactory solution of many of the difficult and obscure passages of it. The prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, have always been reckoned two as hard chapters as any in that book; but they are here expounded, and reconciled with the divine wisdom, purity, and goodness, by the end of these things. (4.) It presents us with a great example of patience, and close adherence to God in the midst of the sorest calamities. Sir Richard Blackmore's most ingenious pen, in his excellent preface to his paraphrase on this book, makes Job a hero proper for an epick poem; for (saith he) "He appears brave in distress, and valiant in affliction, maintains his virtue, and with that his character, under the most exasperating provocations that the malice of hell could invent, and thereby gives a most noble example of passive fortitude, a character no way inferior to that of the active hero, &c." (5.) It presents us with an illustrious type of Christ, the particulars of which we shall endeavour to take notice of as we go along. In general, Job was a great sufferer, was emptied and humbled, but in order to his greater glory. So Christ abased himself that we might be exalted. The learned bishop Patrick quotes St Jerom more than once speaking of Job as a type of Christ, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, who was persecuted for a time by men and devils, and seemed forsaken of God too, but was raised up to be an intercessor even for his friends that had added affliction to his misery. When the apostle speaks of the patience of Job, he immediately takes notice of the end of the Lord, i. e. of the Lord Jesus (as some understand it) typified by Job, James v. 11.

In the book we have, (1.) The history of Job's sufferings, and his patience under them, chap. i, ii. not without a mixture of human frailty, chap. iii. (2.) A dispute between him and his friends upon them, in which (1.) The opponents were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. (2.) The respondent was Job. (3.) The moderators were (1.) Elihu, chap. xxxii—xxxvii. (2.) God himself, chap. xxxviii.—xli. (3.) The issue of all in Job's honour and prosperity, chap. xlii. Upon the whole we learn, that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but when the Lord delivereth them out of all, the trial of their faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory.



## C H A P. I.

The history of Job begins here with an account (1.) Of his great piety in general, ver. 1. and in a particular instance, ver. 5. (2.) Of his great prosperity, ver. 2, 3, 4. (3.) Of the malice of Satan against him, and the permission he obtained to try his constancy, ver. 6—12. (4.) Of the surprising troubles that befel him, the ruin of his estate, ver. 13—17. and the death of his children, ver. 18, 19. (5.) Of his exemplary patience and piety under these troubles, ver. 20.—22. In all which he is set forth for an example of suffering affliction, from which no prosperity can secure us, but thro' which integrity and uprightness will preserve us.

1. **T**Here was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. 2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. 3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household: so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

Concerning Job we are here told,

1. That he was a man; therefore subject to like passions as we are. He was *Job*, a worthy man, a man of note and eminency, a magistrate, a man in authority. The country he lived in was the land of Uz, in the eastern part of Arabia, which lay towards Chaldea, near Euphrates, probably not far from Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abraham was called. When God called one good man out of that country, yet he left not himself without witness, but raised up another in it to be a preacher of righteousness. God has his remnant in all places, sealed ones out of every nation, as well as out of every tribe of Israel, *Rev. vii. 9.* It was the privilege of the land of Uz to have so good a man as Job in it, now it was Arabia the Happy indeed; and it was the praise of Job, that he was eminently good in so bad a place: The worse others were round about him, the better he was.

His name *Job*, or *Jjob* (some say) signifies *one hated*, and counted as an enemy; others make it to signify one that grieves, or groans; thus the sorrow he carried in his name might be a check to his joy in his prosperity. Dr Cave derives it from *Jâab*, to love, or desire, intimating how welcome his birth was to his parents, and how much he was the desire of their eyes, and yet there was a time when he cursed the day of his birth. Who can tell what the day may prove which yet begins with a bright morning?

2. That he was a very good man, eminently pious, and better than his neighbours. *He was perfect and upright.* This is intended to shew us, not only what reputation he had among men, that he was generally taken for an honest man, but what was really his character, for it is the judgment of God concerning him, and we are sure that is according to truth. (1.) Job was a religious man, one that feared God, i. e. worshipped him according to his will, and governed himself by the rules of the divine law in every thing. (2.) He was sincere in his religion; he was perfect, not sinful, he himself owns, *chap. ix. 20. If I say I am perfect, I shall be proved perverse:* But having a respect to all God's commandments, aiming at perfection, he was really as good as he seemed to be, and did not dissemble in his profession of piety, his heart was sound, and his eye single. Sincerity is gospel-perfection; I know no religion without it. (3.) He was upright in his dealings both with God and man, was faithful to his promises, steady in his counsels, true to every trust reposed in him, and made conscience of all he said and did. See *Isa. xxxiii. 15.* Tho' he was not of Israel, he was indeed an *Israelite without guile.* (4.) The fear of God reigning in his heart, was the principle that governed his whole conversation: That made him perfect and upright, inward and entire for God, universal and uniform in religion; that kept him close and constant to his duty. He feared God, had a reverence for his majesty, a regard to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. (5.) He dreaded the thought of doing an ill thing; with the utmost abhorrence and detestation, and with a constant care and watchfulness, he eschewed evil, avoided all appearances of sin, and approaches to it, and this because of the fear of God, *Neh. v. 15. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, Prov. viii. 13. and then by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil, Prov. xvi. 6.*

3. That he was a man who prospered greatly in this world, and made a mighty figure in his country. He was prosperous and yet pious: Tho' it is hard and rare, it is not impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven: With God even this is possible, and by his grace, the temptations of worldly wealth are not insuperable. He was pious, and his piety was a friend to his prosperity; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. He was prosperous, and his prosperity put a lustre upon his piety, and

No. xxxiv.

gave him that was so good, so much greater opportunity of doing good. The acts of his piety were grateful returns to God for the instances of his prosperity; and in the abundance of the good things God gave him, he served God the more cheerfully.

1. He had a numerous family; eminent for religion, and yet not a hermit; not a recluse, but the father and master of a family. It is an instance of his prosperity, that his house was filled with children, which are a heritage of the Lord, and his reward, *Psalm cxxvii. 3.* He had seven sons and three daughters, ver. 2. Some of each sex, and more of the more noble sex, in which the family is built up. Children must be looked upon as blessings, for so they are, especially to good people that will give them good instructions, and set them good examples, and put up good prayers for them. Job had many children, and yet he was neither oppressive nor uncharitable, but very liberal to the poor, *chap. xxxi. 17, &c.* Those that have great families to provide for, ought to consider that which is prudently given in alms is set out to the best interest, and put into the best fund for their childrens benefit.

2. He had a good estate for the support of his family. His substance was considerable, ver. 3. Riches are called substance, in conformity to the common form of speaking, otherwise to the soul and another world they are but shadows, things that are not, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* It is only in heavenly wisdom that we inherit substance, *Prov. viii. 21.* In those days, when the earth was not fully peopled, it was as now in some of the plantations, men might have land enough upon easy terms, if they had but wherewithal to stock it; and therefore Job's substance is described not by the acres of land he was lord of, but

1. By his cattle; *Sheep and camels, oxen and asses.* The numbers of each are here set down, probably not the exact number, but thereabout, a very few under or over. The sheep are put first, because of most use in the family, as Solomon observes, *Prov. xxvii. 23, 26, 27. Lambs for thy clothing, and milk for the food of thy household.* Job, it is likely, had silver and gold as well as Abraham, *Gen. xiii. 2.* but then men valued their own and their neighbours estates by that which was for service and present use, more than by that which was for shew and state, and fit only to be hoarded. As soon as God had made man, and provided for his maintenance, by the herbs and fruits, he made him rich and great, by giving him dominion over the creatures, *Gen. i. 28.* That therefore being still continued to man, notwithstanding his defecti-  
on, *Gen. ix. 2.* is still to be reckoned one of the most considerable instances of mens wealth, honour, and power, *Isa. viii. 6.*

2. By his servants. He had a very great household, or husbandry, many that were employed for him, and maintained by him; and thus he both had honour, and did good; yet thus he was involved in a great deal of care, and put to a great deal of charge. See the vanity of this world, as goods are increased, they must be increased that tend them and occupy them, and they will be increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes? *Eccles. v. 11.*

In a word, *Job was the greatest of all the men of the east*, and they the richest in the world: Those were rich indeed who were replenished more than the east, *Isa. ii. 6.* Margin. Job's wealth with his wisdom, intitled him to that honour and power he had in his country, which he describes, *chap. xxix.* and made him set chief. Job was upright and honest, and yet grew rich, nay, therefore grew rich; for honesty is the best policy, and piety and charity ordinarily the surest ways of thriving. He had a great household and much business, and yet kept up the fear and worship of God, and he and his house served the Lord. The account of Job's piety and prosperity comes before the history of his great afflictions, to shew that neither will secure us from the common, no nor from the uncommon, calamities of human life. Piety will not secure us, as Job's mistaken friends thought, for all things come alike to all, prosperity will not; as a careless world thinks, *Isa. xlvii. 8. I sit as a queen, and therefore shall see no sorrow.*

4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day, and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. 5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all: for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

We have here a further account of Job's prosperity, and his piety.

1. His great comfort in his children is taken notice of as an instance of his prosperity; for our temporal comforts are borrowed, depend upon others, and are as those about us are. Job himself mentions it as one of the greatest joys of his prosperous estate, that his children were about him, *chap. xxix. 5.* And they kept a circular feast at some certain times, ver. 4. they went and feasted in their houses. It was a comfort to this good man, (1.) To see his children grown up, and settled in the world; all his sons were in houses of their own, probably married, and to each of them he had given a competent portion to set up with. They that



had been olive-plants round his table, were removed to tables of their own. (2.) To see them thrive in their affairs, and able to feast one another, as well as to feed themselves. Good parents desire, promote, and rejoice in, their childrens wealth and prosperity, as their own. (3.) To see them in health, no sickness in their houses, for that would have spoiled their feasting, and turned it into mourning. (4.) Especially to see them live in love and unity, and mutual good affection, no jars or quarrels among them, no strangeness, no shyness one of another, no strait-handedness, but tho' every one knew his own, they lived with as much freedom as if they had had all in common. It is comfortable to the hearts of parents, and comely in the eyes of all, to see brethren thus knit together; *Behold how good and how pleasant it is!* Psal. cxxxiii. 1. (5.) It added to the comfort to see the brothers so kind to their sisters, that they sent for them to feast with them; who were so modest, that they would not have gone, if they had not been sent for. Those brothers that slight their sisters, care not for their company, and have no concern for their comfort, are ill-bred, and ill-natured, and very unlike Job's sons. It seems their feast was so sober and decent, that their sisters were good company for them at it. (6.) They feasted in their own houses, not in publick houses, where they would be more exposed to temptations, and which was not so creditable.

We do not find that Job himself feasted with them, doubtless they invited him, and he would have been the most welcome guest at any of their tables; nor was it from any sourness or moroseness of temper, or for want of natural affection that he kept away, but he was old and dead to those things, like Barzillai, 2 Sam. xix. 35. and considered that the young people would be more free and pleasant, if they were none but themselves. Yet he would not restrain his children from that diversion which he denied himself; young people may be allowed a youthful liberty, provided they flee youthful lusts.

2. His great care about his children is taken notice of as an instance of his piety; for that we are really, which we are relatively: Those that are good will be good to their children, and especially do what they can for the good of their souls. Observe, ver. 5. Job's pious concern for the spiritual welfare of his children.

1. He was jealous over them, with a godly jealousy; and so we ought to be over our selves, and those that are dearest to us, as far as is necessary to our care and endeavour for their good. Job had given his children good education, had comfort in them, and good hope concerning them, and yet he said, *it may be my sons have sinned* in the days of their feasting, more than at other times, have been too merry, have taken too great a liberty in eating and drinking, and have *curst God in their hearts*, i. e. have entertained atheistical, profane, thoughts in their minds, unworthy notions of God and his providence, and the exercises of religion. When they were full, they were ready to *deny God, and to say, who is the Lord?* Prov. xxx. 9. to forget God, and to say, the power of our hand has gotten us this wealth, Deut. viii. 12, &c. Nothing alienates the mind more from God than the indulgence of the flesh.

2. As soon as the days of their feasting were over, he called them to the solemn exercises of religion. Not while their feasting lasted, let them take their time for that; there is a time for all things: But when it was over, their good father minded them that they must know when to take up, and not think to fare sumptuously every day; tho' they had their days of feasting the week round, they must not think to have them the year round, they had something else to do. Note, Those that are merry must find a time to be serious.

3. He sent to them to prepare for solemn ordinances, *sent and sanctified them*; ordered them to examine their own consciences, and repent of what they had done amiss in their feasting; to lay aside their vanity, and compose themselves for religious exercises. Thus he kept his authority over them for their good, and they submitted to it, tho' they were got into houses of their own. Still he was the priest of the family, and at his altar they all attended, valuing their share in his prayers more than their share in his estate. Parents cannot give grace to their children, it is God that sanctifies, but they ought by seasonable admonitions and counsels to further their sanctification. In their baptism they were sanctified to God, let it be our desire and endeavour that they may be sanctified for him.

4. He offered sacrifice for them, both to atone for the sins he feared they had been guilty of in the days of their feasting, and to implore for them mercy to pardon, and grace to prevent the debauching of their minds, and corrupting of their manners by the liberty they had taken, and to preserve their piety and purity.

*For he with mournful eyes had often spy'd,  
Scatter'd on pleasure's smooth, but treacherous, tide,  
The spoils of virtue, over-power'd by sense,  
And floating wrecks of ruin'd innocence.*

Sir R. Blackmore.

Job (like Abraham) had an altar for his family, on which, it is likely, he offered sacrifice daily, but on this extraordinary occasion he offered more sacrifices than usual, and with more solemnity, according to the number of them all, one for each child. Parents

should be particular in their addresses to God for the several branches of their family; for this child I prayed, according to its particular temper, genius, and condition; to which the prayers, as well as the endeavours, must be accommodated.

When these sacrifices were to be offered (1.) He rose early, as one in care that his children might not lie long under guilt, and as one whose heart was upon his work, and his desire towards it. (2.) He required his children to attend the sacrifice, that they might join with him in the prayers he offered with the sacrifice, that the sight of the killing of the sacrifice might humble them much for their sins, for which they deserved to die, and the sight of the offering of it up might lead them to a mediator: And this serious work would help to make them serious again after the days of their gaiety.

Lastly, Thus he did continually; not only whenever an occasion of this kind recurred, for *he that is washed, needs to wash his feet*, Joh. xiii. 10. the acts of repentance and faith must be oft renewed, because we oft repeat our transgressions; but all days, every day, he offered up his sacrifices, was constant to his devotions, and did not omit them any day. The occasional exercises of religion will not excuse us from those that are stated. He that serves God uprightly, will serve him continually.

6. ¶ Now there was a day, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. 7. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 8. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10. Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 12. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Job was not only so rich and great, but withal so wise and good, and had such an interest both in heaven and earth, that one would think the mountain of his prosperity stood so strong that it could not be moved; but here we have a thick cloud gathering over his head, pregnant with a horrible tempest. We must never think our selves secure from storms while we are in this lower region.

Before we are told how his troubles surprized and seized him here in this visible world, we are here told how they were concerted in the world of spirits: that the devil having a great enmity to Job for his eminent piety, begged and obtained leave to torment him. It doth not at all derogate from the credibility of Job's story in general, to allow that this discourse between God and Satan in these verses is parabolical, like that of Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 19. and an allegory designed to represent the malice of the devil against good men, and the divine check and restraint that malice is under; only thus much further is intimated, that the affairs of this earth are very much the subject of the counsels of the unseen world. That world is dark to us, but we lie very open to it.

Now here we have,

1. Satan among the sons of God. ver. 6. an adversary, so Satan signifies, to God, to men, to all good: he thrust into an assembly of the sons of God that came to present themselves before the Lord. This means either (1.) A meeting of the saints on earth; professors of religion in the patriarchal age were called sons of God, Gen. vi. 2. they had then religious assemblies, and stated times for them: the king came in to see his guests; the eye of God was on all present: but there was a serpent in paradise, a Satan among the sons of God; when they come together he is among them to distract and disturb them, stands at their right hand to resist them; *the Lord rebuke thee, Satan!* Or, (2.) A meeting of the angels in heaven; they are the sons of God, Job xxxviii. 7. They came to give an account of their negotiations on earth, and to receive new instructions. Satan was one of them originally, but *how art thou fallen, O Lucifer!* He shall no more stand in that congregation, yet he is here represented as coming among them, either summoned to appear as a criminal, or connived at for the present, tho' an intruder.

2. His examination, how he came thither; ver. 7. *the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?* He knew very well whence he came, and with what design he came thither, that as the good angels came to do good, he came for a permission to do hurt; but he would, by calling him to an account, shew him



him that he was under check and controul. *Whence comest thou?* He asks this (1.) As wondering what brought him thither. *Is Saul among the prophets!* Satan among the sons of God! Yes, for he transforms himself into an angel of light, (2 Cor. xi. 13, 14.) and would seem one of them. Note, It is possible a man may be a child of the devil, and yet be found in the assemblies of the sons of God in this world; and there may pass undiscovered by men, and yet be challenged by the all-seeing God; friend, how comest thou in hither? Or, (2.) As enquiring what he had been doing before he came thither: the same question was perhaps put to the rest of them that presented themselves before the Lord, whence came you? we are accountable to God for all our haunts, and all the ways we traverse.

3. The account he gives of himself, and the tour he had made. I come (saith he) *from going to and fro in the earth.* (1.) He could not pretend he had been doing any good, could give no such account of himself as the sons of God could that presented themselves before the Lord, who came from executing his orders, serving the interests of his kingdom, and ministering to the heirs of salvation. (2.) He would not own he had been doing any hurt; that he had been drawing men from their allegiance to God, deceiving and destroying souls; no, *I have done no wickedness*, Prov. xxx. 20. *Thy servant went no whither.* In saying he had walked to and fro through the earth, he intimates that he had kept himself within the bounds allotted him, and had not transgressed his tether, for *the dragon is cast out into the earth*, Rev. xii. 9. and not yet confined to his place of torment. While we are on this earth, we are within his reach, and with so much subtilty, swiftness, and industry, doth he penetrate into all the corners of it, that we cannot be in any place secure from his temptations. (3.) He yet seems to give some representation of his own character. 1. Perhaps it is spoken proudly, and with an air of haughtiness, as if he were indeed the prince of this world, as if the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them were his, Luke iv. 6. and he had now been walking in circuit thro' his own territories. 2. Perhaps it is spoken fretfully, and with discontent, he had been walking to and fro, and could find no rest, but was as much a fugitive and a vagabond as Cain in the land of Nod. 3. Perhaps it is spoken carefully, I have been hard at work, going to and fro, or (as some read it) searching about in the earth; really in quest of an opportunity to do mischief. He walks about seeking whom he may devour. It concerns us therefore to be sober and vigilant.

4. The question God puts to him concerning Job, ver. 8. *Hast thou considered my servant Job?* As when we meet with one that has been in a distant place, where we have a friend we dearly love, we are ready to ask, you have been in such a place, pray did you see my friend there? Observe 1. How honourably God speaks of Job; He is *my servant*. Good men are God's servants, and he is pleased to reckon himself honoured in their services, and that they are to him for a name and a praise, Jer. xiii. 11. and a crown of glory. Isa. lxii. 3. *Yonder is my servant Job*, there is none like him, none I value like him of all the princes and potentates of the earth, one such faint as he is worth them all: none like him for uprightness and serious piety, many do well, but he excelleth them all; there is not to be found such great faith, no not in Israel: thus Christ long after boasted of the centurion, and the woman of Canaan, who were both of them like Job, strangers to that common-wealth. The faints glory in God, *who is like thee among thee gods?* and he is pleased to glory in them, *who is like Israel among the people?* so here, none like Job, none in earth, that state of imperfection; those in heaven do indeed far outshine him; those who are least in that kingdom are greater than he: but on earth there is not his like. There is none like him in that land; so some good men are the glory of their country.

2. How closely he gives to Satan this good character of Job. *Hast thou set thy heart to my servant Job?* designing hereby (1.) To aggravate the apostasy and misery of that wicked spirit; how unlike him art thou? Note, The holiness and happiness of the saints is the shame and torment of the devil, and the devil's children. (2.) To answer the devil's seeming boast of the interest he had in this earth; I have been walking to and fro in it, saith he, and it is all my own; all flesh have corrupted their way; they all sit still, and are at rest in their sins, Zech. i. 10, 11. Nay, hold faith God, Job is my faithful servant. Satan may boast, but he shall not triumph. (3.) To anticipate his accusations, q. d. Satan, I know thine errand, thou art come to inform against Job, but *Hast thou considered him?* doth not his unquestionable character give thee the lye? Note, God knows all the malice of the devil and his instruments against his servants; and we have an advocate ready to appear for us, even before we are accused.

5. The devil's base insinuation against Job, in answer to God's encomium of him. He cannot deny but that Job feared God, but suggests that he was mercenary in his religion, and therefore an hypocrite, ver. 9. *doth Job fear God for nought?* Observe (1.) How impatient the devil was of hearing Job praised, tho' it was God himself that praised him. Those are like the devil who cannot endure any body should be praised but themselves, but grudge at the just share of reputation others have, as Saul,

1 Sam. xviii. 5. and the Pharisees, Mat. xxi. 5. (2.) How far he was to seek for something to object against him; he could not accuse him of any thing that was ill, and therefore chargeth him with by-ends in doing good. Had the one half of that been true which his angry friends in the heat of dispute charged him with, chap. xv. 4.—xxii. 5. Satan would no doubt have brought it against him now; but no such thing could be alleged, and therefore (3.) See how slyly he censures him as an hypocrite, not asserting that he was so, but only asking, Is he not so? which is the common way of slanderers, to suggest that by way of query which yet they have no reason to think is true: whisperers, backbiters! Note, It is not strange if those that are approved, and accepted of God, be unjustly censured by the devil, and his instruments; and if they are otherwise unexceptionable, it is easy to charge them with hypocrisy, as Satan charged Job, and they have no way to clear themselves, but patiently to wait for the judgment of God. As there is nothing we should dread more than being hypocrites, so there is nothing we need dread less than being called and counted so without cause. (4.) How unjustly he accuseth him as mercenary, to prove him an hypocrite. It was a great truth that Job did not fear God for nought; he got well by it, for godliness is great gain: but it was a false lye, that he would not have feared God, if we had not got this by it, as the event proved. Job's friends charged him with hypocrisy because he was greatly afflicted, Satan because he greatly prospered. It is no hard matter for those to calumniate that seek an occasion. It is not mercenary to look at the eternal recompence in our obedience; but to aim at temporal advantages in our religion, and to make it subservient to that, is spiritual idolatry, worshipping the creature more than the Creator, and is likely to end in a fatal apostasy; men cannot long serve God and mammon.

6. The complaint Satan made of Job's prosperity, ver. 10. Observe (1.) What God had done for Job. He had protected him, made a hedge about him, for the defence of his person, his family, and all his possessions. Note, God's peculiar people are taken under his special protection, they, and all that belong to them; divine grace makes a hedge about their spiritual life, and divine providence about their natural life, so they are safe and easy. He had prospered him, not in idleness or injustice; the devil could not accuse him of them, but in the way of honest diligence, *thou hast blessed the work of his hands*; and without that blessing, be the hands never so strong, never so skilful, the work will not prosper; but with that, *his substance is wonderfully increased in the land*; the blessing of the Lord makes rich; Satan himself owns it.

(2.) What notice the devil took of it, and how he improved it against him. The devil speaks of it with vexation, I see thou hast made a hedge about him, round about; as if he had walked it round, to see if he could spy ever a gap in it, for him to enter in at, to do him a mischief; but he was disappointed, it was a compleat hedge. *The wicked one saw it and was grieved*, and argued against Job, that the only reason why he served God, was because God prospered him. No thanks to him to be true to the government that prefers him, and to serve a master that pays him so well.

7. The proof Satan undertakes to give of the hypocrisy and mercenariness of Job's religion, if he might but have leave to strip him of his wealth. Let it be put to this issue, saith he, ver. 11. make him poor, frown upon him, turn thine hand against him, and then see where his religion will be; touch what he hath, and it will appear what he is. *If he curses thee not to thy face*, let me never be believed, but posited for a liar and false accuser. Let me perish or be damned, if he curse thee not. So some supply the imprecation, which the devil himself modestly concealed, but the profane swearers of our age impudently and daringly speak out. Observe, (1.) How slightly he speaks of the affliction he desired that Job might be tried with; do but touch all that he hath, do but begin with him, do but threaten to make him poor, a little cross will change his tune. (2.) How spitefully he speaks of the impression it would make upon Job. He will not only let fall his devotion, but turn it into an open defiance, not only think hardly of thee, but *even curse thee to thy face*. The word translated curse is *barac*, the same that ordinarily and originally signifies to bless, but cursing God is so impious a thing, that the holy language would not admit the name; but that where the sense requires it, it must be so understood, is plain from 1 Kings xxi. 10—13, where the word is used concerning the crime charged on Naboth, that he did blaspheme God and the king.

Now, (1.) It is likely Satan did think that Job, if impoverished, would renounce his religion, and so disprove his profession, and if so (as a learned gentleman has observed in his *Mount of Spirits*) Satan had made out his own universal empire among the children of men. God declared Job the best man then living. Now if Satan can prove him an hypocrite, it will follow that God had not one faithful servant among men, and that there was no such thing as true and sincere piety in the world, but religion was all a sham, and Satan was king *de facto* over all mankind. But it appeared, that *the Lord knows them that are his*, and is not deceived in any. (2.) However, if Job should retain his religion, Satan would have the satisfaction to see him sorely afflicted: he hates



hates good men, and delights in their griefs, as God has *pleasure in their prosperity*.

8. The permission God gave to Satan to afflict Job for the trial of his sincerity. Satan desired God to do it, *put forth thy hand now*. God allowed him to do it, *ver. 12. All that he has in thy hand, make the trial as sharp as thou canst; do thy worst at him*. Now, (1.) It is matter of wonder that God should give Satan such a permission as this, should *deliver the soul of his turtle-dove* into the hand of the adversary, such a lamb to such a lion; but he did it for his own glory, the honour of Job, the explanation of providence, and the encouragement of his afflicted people in all ages; to make a case, which, being adjudged, might be a useful precedent. He suffered Job to be tried, as he suffered Peter to be sifted, but took care *his faith should not fail*, Luke xxii. 32. and then the trial of it was *found unto praise, and honour, and glory*, 1 Pet. i. 7. But, (2.) It is matter of comfort that God has the devil *in a chain*, Rev. xx. 1. He could not afflict Job without leave from God first asked and obtained; and then no further than he had leave, *only upon himself put not forth thine hand*, meddle not with his body, but only with his estate. It is a limited power that the devil hath; he hath no power to debauch men but what they give him themselves, nor power to afflict men but what is *given him from above*.

Lastly, Satan's departure from this meeting of the sons of God: before they broke up, Satan went forth (as Cain, Gen. iv. 16.) *from the presence of the Lord*; no longer detained before him (as Doeg was, 1 Sam. xxi. 7.) than until he had accomplished his malicious purpose. He went forth (1.) Glad that he had gained his point; proud of the permission he had to do mischief to a good man, and (2.) Resolved to lose no time, but speedily to put his project in execution: he went forth now not to go to and fro, rambling through the earth, but with a direct course to fall upon poor Job, who is carefully going on in the way of his duty, and knows nothing of the matter. What passeth between good and bad spirits concerning us we are not aware.

13. ¶ And there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brothers house: 14. And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: 15. And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away, yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burnt up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 17. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another and said, Thy sons and thy daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brothers house: 19. And behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

We have here a particular account of Job's troubles: (1.) Satan brought them upon him on the very day that his children began their course of feasting, at their *eldest brothers house*, ver. 13. where he having (we may suppose) the double portion, the entertainment was the most rich and plentiful. The whole family, no doubt, was in perfect repose, and all were easy, and under no apprehension of trouble; now when they revived this custom; and this time Satan chose, that the trouble coming now might be the more grievous, *the night of my pleasure has he turned into fear*, Isa. xxi. 4.

(2.) They all come upon him at once; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking another came, and before he had told his story a third, and a fourth followed immediately. Thus Satan by the divine permission ordered it, (1.) That there might appear a more than ordinary displeasure of God against him in his troubles, and by that he might be exasperated against the divine providence, as if it were resolved, right or wrong, to ruin him, and not give him time to speak for himself. (2.) That he might not have leisure to consider and recollect himself, and reason himself into a gracious submission, but might be overwhelmed and overpowered by a complication of calamities. If he have not room to pause a little, he will be apt to speak in haste, and then, if ever, he will curse his God. Note, The children of God are often in heaviness, through manifold temptations: deep calls to deep, waves and billows, one upon the neck of another. Let one affliction therefore quicken and help us to prepare for another, for how deep soever we have drunk of the bitter cup, as long as we are in this world we cannot be sure that we have drunk our share, and that

it will finally pass from us. (3.) They took from him all that he had, and made a full end of his enjoyments. The detail of his losses answers to the foregoing inventory of his possessions.

1. He had 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she asses, and a competent number of servants to attend them, and all those he lost at once, ver. 14, 15. The account he has of this lets him know, (1.) That it was not through any carelessness of his servants, for then his resentment might have spent itself upon them: *The oxen were plowing*, not playing, and the asses not suffered to stray, and so taken up as waifs, but feeding beside them, under the servant's eye, each in their place, and they that passed by we may suppose blessed them, and said, *God speed the plough*. Note, All our prudence, care, and diligence, cannot secure us from affliction, no not from those afflictions which are commonly owing to imprudence and negligence. *Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman, tho' never so wakeful, wakes but in vain*; yet it is some comfort under a trouble if it found us in the way of our duty, and not in any by-path. (2.) That it was through the wickedness of his neighbours the Sabeans, a sort of rapparees perhaps, that lived by spoil, and plunder, they carried off the oxen and asses, and slew the servants that faithfully and bravely did their best to defend them; and *one only escaped*, not in kindness to him or his master, but that Job might have the certain intelligence of it, by an eye-witness, before he heard it by a flying report, which would have brought it upon him gradually. We have no reason to suspect that either Job or his servants had given any provocation to these Sabeans to make this inroad, but Satan put it into their hearts to do it, to do it now, and so gained a double point, for he made both Job to suffer and them to sin. Note, When Satan has God's permission, to do mischief he will not want mischievous men to be his instruments in doing it, for he is a *spirit that works in the children of disobedience*.

2. He had *seven thousand sheep*, and shepherds that kept them, and all those he lost at the same time by lightning, ver. 16. Job was perhaps in his own mind ready to reproach the Sabeans, and fly out against them for their injustice and cruelty, when the next news immediately directs him to look upward, *the fire of God is fallen from heaven*. As thunder is his voice, so lightning is his fire: but this was such an extraordinary lightning, and levelled so directly against Job, that all his sheep and shepherds were not only killed, but consumed by it at once, and one shepherd only left alive to carry the news to poor Job. The devil aiming to make him curse God and renounce his religion, managed this part of the trial very artfully, in order thereunto. (1.) His sheep with which especially he used to honour God in sacrifice, were all taken from him, as if God were angry at his offerings, and would punish him in those very things which he had employed in his service. Having misrepresented Job to God as a false servant, in pursuance of his old design to set heaven and earth at variance, he here misrepresented God to Job as a hard master, who would not protect those flocks out of which he had had so many burnt-offerings: this would tempt Job to say, *it is vain to serve God*. (2.) The messenger called the lightning the *fire of God*, and innocently enough, but perhaps Satan thereby designed to strike into his mind this thought, that God was *turned to be his enemy, and fought against him*, which was much more grievous to him than all the insults of the Sabeans. He owns, chap. xxxi. 23. that *destruction from God was a terror to him*. How terrible then were the tidings of this destruction, which came immediately from the hand of God! Had the fire from heaven consumed the sheep upon the altar, he might have construed it a token of God's favour; but consuming them in the pasture, he could not but look upon it as a token of God's displeasure: there had not been the like since Sodom was burned.

3. He had *three thousand camels*, and servants tending them, and he lost them all at the same time by the Chaldeans, who came in three bands and drove them away, and slew the servants, ver. 17. If the fire of God which fell upon Job's honest servants, that were in the way of their duty, had fallen upon the Sabeans and Chaldean robbers that were doing mischief, God's judgments therein would have been, like the great mountains, evident and conspicuous; but when the way of the wicked prospers, and they carry off their booty, while just and good men are suddenly cut off, God's righteousness is like the great deep, the bottom of which we cannot find, *Psal. xxxvi. 6*.

4. His dearest and most valuable possessions were his ten children; and to conclude the tragedy, news is brought him at the same time that they were killed, and buried in the ruins of the house in which they were feasting, and all the servants that waited on them, except one that came express with the tidings of it, ver. 18, 19. This was the greatest of Job's losses, and which could not but go nearest him, and therefore the devil reserved it for the last, that if the other provocations failed, this might make him curse God. Our children are pieces of ourselves, it is very hard to part with them, and touches a good man in as tender a part as any other. But to part with them all at once, and for them to be all cut off in a moment who had been so many years his cares and hopes, went to the quick indeed. (1.) They all died together, and not one of them was left alive. David, tho' a wife and good man, was put very much off the hinges by the death of one son; how hard then did it bear upon poor Job, who lost



lost them all, and in one moment was written childless? (2.) They died suddenly: Had they been taken away by some lingering disease, he had had notice to expect their death, and prepare for the breach; but this came upon him without giving him any warning. (3.) They died when they were feasting and making merry: Had they died suddenly when they were praying, he might the better have borne it; he would have hoped that death had found them in a good frame, if their blood had been mingled with their sacrifices; but to have it mingled with their feast, where he himself used to be jealous of them, that they had *sinned, and cursed God in their hearts*, to have that day come upon them at unawares, like a thief in the night, when perhaps their heads were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; this could not but add much to his grief, considering what a tender concern he always had for his childrens souls, and that they were now out of the reach of the sacrifices he used to offer, *according to the number of them all*. See how all things come alike to all. Job's children were constantly prayed for by their father, and lived in love one with another, and yet came to this untimely end. (4.) They died by a wind of the devil's raising, who is *the prince of the power of the air*, Eph. ii. 2. But which was looked upon to be an immediate hand of God, and a token of his wrath. So Bildad constructed it, chap. viii. 4. *Thy children have sinned against him, and he has cast them away in their transgression*. (5.) They were taken away when he had most need of them to comfort him under all his other losses. Such miserable comforters are all creatures; in God only we have a present help at all times.

20. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. 21. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. 22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

The devil had done all he desired leave to do against Job, to provoke him to curse God, had touched all he had, touched it with a witness; he whom the rising sun saw the richest of all the men in the east, before night was poor to a proverb. If his riches had been, as Satan insinuated, the only principle of his religion, now he had lost his riches he had certainly lost his religion; but the account we have in these verses, of his pious deportment under his affliction, sufficiently proved the devil a liar, and Job an honest man.

1. He carried himself like a man under his afflictions; not stupid and senseless, like a stock or stone, not unnatural and unaffected at the death of his children and servants, no, *ver. 20. He arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head*, which were the usual expressions of great sorrow, to shew that he was sensible of the hand of the Lord that was gone out against him; yet he did not break out into any indecencies, nor discover an extravagant passion, he did not faint away, but arose, as a champion to the combat; did not in a heat throw off his clothes, but very gravely, in conformity to the custom of the country, rent his mantle, his cloak, or outer garment; did not passionately tear his hair, but deliberately shaved his head: By all which it appeared that he kept his temper, and bravely maintained the possession and repose of his own soul, in the midst of all these provocations. It is observable when he began to shew his resentment; not till he heard of the death of his children, and then he arose, then he rent his mantle. A worldly unbelieving heart would have said, now the meat is gone, it is well the mouths are gone too, now there are no portions, it is well there are no children; but Job knew better things, and would have been thankful if providence had spared his children, tho' he had had little or nothing for them, for *Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide*. Some expositors remembering that it was usual with the Jews to rend their clothes when they heard blasphemy, conjecture that Job rent his clothes in a holy indignation at the blasphemous thoughts which Satan now cast into his mind; tempting him to curse God.

2. He carried himself like a wife and good man under his affliction, like a *perfect and upright man*, and one that *feared God*, and *eschewed the evil of sin* more than that of outward trouble.

1. He humbled himself under the hand of God, and accommodated himself to the providences he was under, as one that knew how to want as well as how to abound. When God called to weeping and mourning, he wept and mourned, *rent his mantle, and shaved his head*, and as one that abased himself even to the dust before God, he *fell down upon the ground*, in a penitent sense of sin, and a patient submission to the will of God, *accepting the punishment of his iniquity*. Hereby he shewed his sincerity, for *hypocrites cry not when God binds them*, Job xxxvi. 13. Hereby he disposed himself to get good by the affliction, for how can we improve the grief we will not feel?

2. He composed himself with quieting considerations, that he might not be disturbed, and put out of the possession of his own soul by these events: He reasons from the common state of human life, which he describes with application to himself; *Naked came I (as others do) out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return* No. xxxiv.

*thither*, into the lap of our common mother, the earth, as the child, when it is sick or weary, lays its head in its mother's bosom. *Dust we were in our original, and to dust we return in our exit*, Gen. iii. 19. *to the earth, as we were*, Eccl. xii. 7. *naked shall we return thither*, whence we were taken, viz. to the clay, Job xxxiii. 6. St Paul refers to this of Job, 1 Tim. vi. 7. *We brought nothing of this world's goods into the world*, but have them from others, and *it is certain we can carry nothing out*, but must leave them to others. We come into the world naked, not only unarmed, but unclothed, helpless, shiftless, not so well covered and fenced as other creatures: The sin we are born in, makes us naked to our shame, in the eyes of the holy God. We go out of the world naked; the body doth, tho' the sanctified soul goes clothed, 2 Cor. v. 3. Death strips us of all our enjoyments; clothing can neither warm nor adorn a dead body. This consideration silenced Job under all his losses. (1.) He is but where he was at first; he looks upon himself but as naked, not maimed, not wounded, he was himself still his own man, when nothing else was his own; and therefore but reduced to his first condition: *Nemo tam pauper potest esse quam natus est. Min. Felix*. If we are impoverished, we are not wronged, nor much hurt, for we are but as we were born. (2.) He is but where he must have been at last, and is only unclothed, or unloaded rather, a little sooner than he expected: If we put off our clothes before we go to bed, it is some inconvenience, but it may be the better born, when it is near bed-time.

3. He gave glory to God, and expressed himself upon this occasion with a great veneration for the divine providence, and an awful submission to the disposals of it; and we may well rejoice to find Job in this good frame, because this was the very thing upon which the trial of his integrity was put, tho' he did not know it. The devil said he would; under his affliction, curse God; but he blessed him, and so proved himself an honest man.

1. He acknowledged the hand of God both in the mercies he had formerly enjoyed, and in the afflictions he was now exercised with. *The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away*. We must own the divine providence, (1.) In all our comforts: God gave us our being, *made us, and not we our selves*, gave us our wealth; it was not our own ingenuity or industry that enriched us, but God's blessing on our cares and endeavours; he gave us power to get wealth; not only made the creatures for us, but bestowed upon us our share. (2.) In all our crosses: The same that gave hath taken away, and may he not do what he will with his own? See how he looks above instruments, and keeps his eye upon the first cause; he doth not say, the Lord gave, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans have taken away, God made me rich, and the devil has made me poor, but he that gave has taken, and for that reason he is dumb, and has nothing to say, because God did it; he that gave all, may take which and when, how and how much, he pleaseth. Seneca could argue thus, *abstulit, sed et dedit*; and Epictetus excellently (cap. xv.) when thou art deprived of any comfort, suppose a child taken away by death, or a part of thy estate lost, say not *ἀπώλεσα αὐτὸ*, but *ἀπέδωκε*: Not I have lost it, but I have restored it, and returned it to the right owner; but thou wilt object (saith he) he is an ill man that has robbed me (*κακὸς ὁ ἀρπάζ-μενος*). To which he answers, What is it to thee (*τί δέ σοι μέλει*) by what hand he that gives, remands what he gave?

2. He adores God in both. When all was gone, he fell down and worshipped. Note, Afflictions must not divert us from, but quicken us to the exercises of religion. Weeping must not hinder sowing, not hinder worshipping. He eyed not only the hand of God, but the name of God in his afflictions, and gave glory to that, *Blessed be the name of the Lord*. He hath still the same great and good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them forth to his praise, and can find in his heart to bless God, even when he takes away, as well as when he gives. Thus must we *sing both of mercy and judgment*, Psal. ci. 1. (1.) He blesteth God for what was given, tho' now it was taken away: When our comforts are removed from us, we must thank God that ever we had them, and had them so much longer than we deserved. Nay, (2.) He adores God, even in taking away, and gives him honour by a willing submission; nay, he gives him thanks for good designed him by his afflictions; and gracious supports under his afflictions, and the believing hopes he had of a happy issue at last.

Lastly, Here is the honourable testimony which the Holy Ghost gives to Job's constancy, and good carriage under his afflictions: He passed his trials with applause, *ver. 22. In all this Job did not miss it*, for he did not attribute folly to God, nor in the least reflect upon his wisdom in what he had done. Discontent and impatience do in effect charge God with folly. Against the workings of these therefore Job carefully watched, and so must we, acknowledging that as God has done right, but we have done wickedly, so God has done wisely, but we have done foolishly, very foolishly. They who not only keep their temper under crosses and provocations, but keep up good thoughts of God, and sweet communion with him, whether their praise be of men or no, it will be of God, as Job's here was.



## C H A P. II.

*We left Job honourably acquitted, upon a fair trial between God and Satan concerning him: Satan had leave to touch, to touch and take all he had, and was confident he would then curse God to his face; but, on the contrary, he blessed him, and so he was proved an honest man, and Satan a false accuser. Now one would have thought this had been conclusive, and that Job should never have had his reputation called in question again: But Job is known to be armour of proof, and therefore is here set up for a mark, and brought upon his trial a second time. (1.) Satan moved for another trial, which should touch his bone and his flesh, ver. 1—5. (2.) God for holy ends permits it, ver. 6. (3.) Satan smites him with a very painful and loathsome disease, ver. 7, 8. (4.) His wife tempts him to curse God, but he resists the temptation, ver. 9, 10. (5.) His friends come to condole with him, and to comfort him, ver. 11—13. And in this that good man is set forth for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.*

1. **A** GAIN there was a day, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2. And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 3. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?* and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. 4. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life. 5. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life.

Satan, that sworn enemy to God and all good men, is here pushing forward his malicious prosecution of Job, whom he hated because God loved him, and did all he could to separate between him and his God, to sow discord, and make mischief between them, urging God to afflict him, and then urging him to blaspheme God. One would have thought he had had enough of his former attempt upon Job, in which he was so shamefully baffled and disappointed; but malice is restless, the devil and his instruments are so: They that calumniate good people, and accuse them falsely, will have their saying, tho' the evidence to the contrary be never so plain and full, and they have been cast in the issue which they themselves have put it upon. Satan will have Job's cause called over again: The malicious, unreasonable importunity of that great persecutor of the saints is represented, Rev. xii. 10. by his accusing them before our God day and night, still repeating and urging that against them which has been many a time answered: so did Satan here accuse Job day after day. Here is,

1. The court set, and the prosecutor, or accuser, making his appearance, ver. 1, 2. as before, chap. i. 6, 7. The angels attended God's throne, and Satan among them: One would have expected him to come and confess his malice against Job, and his mistake concerning him, to cry *peccavi* for belying one whom God spoke well of, and to beg pardon; but instead of that, he comes with a further design against Job. He is asked the same question as before, *whence comest thou?* and answers as before, *from going to and fro in the earth*; as if he had been doing no harm, tho' he had been abusing that good man.

2. The judge himself of counsel for the accused, and pleading for him, ver. 3. *Hast thou considered my servant Job better than thou didst, and art thou now at length convinced that he is a faithful servant of mine, a perfect and an upright man, for thou seest he still holds fast his integrity*; this is now added to his character, as a further achievement, instead of letting go his religion, and cursing God, he holds it faster than ever, as that which he has now more than ordinary occasion for; he is the same in adversity that he was in prosperity, and rather better, and more hearty and lively in blessing God than ever he was, and takes root the faster for being thus shaken. See (1.) How Satan is condemned for his allegations against Job: *Thou movedst me against him, as an accuser, to destroy him without cause.* Or, thou in vain movedst me to destroy him, but I will never do that: Good men when they are cast down, are not destroyed, 2 Cor. iv. 9. How well is it for us, that neither men nor devils are to be our judges, for perhaps they would destroy us right or wrong; but our judgment proceedeth from the Lord, whose judgment never errs, or is biased. (2.) How Job is commended for his constancy, notwithstanding

ing the attacks made upon him; still he holds fast his integrity, as his weapon, and thou canst not disarm him; as his treasure, and thou canst not rob him of that; nay, thine endeavours to do it make him hold it the faster: instead of losing ground by the temptation, he gets ground. God speaks of it with wonder, and pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of his own grace, *still he holds fast his integrity.* Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his praise and honour, 1 Pet. i. 7. Constancy crowns integrity.

3. The accusation further prosecuted, ver. 4. What excuse can Satan make for the successlessness of his former attempt? What can he say to palliate it, when he had been so very confident he should gain his point? Why, truly he has this to say, *Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life.* Something of truth there is in this, that self-love and self-preservation are very powerful commanding principles in the hearts of men. Men love themselves better than their nearest relations, even their children, that are pieces of themselves; will not only venture, but give their estates to save their lives. All account life sweet and precious, and while they are themselves in health and at ease, they can keep trouble from their hearts, whatever they lose. And we ought to make a good use of this consideration, and while God continues to us our life and health, and the use of our limbs and senses, we should the more patiently bear the loss of other comforts. See Mat. vi. 25.

But Satan grounds upon this an accusation of Job, slyly representing him (1.) As unnatural to those about him, and one that laid not to heart the death of his children and servants, nor cared how many of them had their skins (as I may say) stripped over their ears, so long as he slept in a whole skin himself. As if he that was so tender of his childrens souls, could be careless of their bodies, and like the ostrich hardened against his young ones, as tho' they were not his. (2.) As wholly selfish, and minding nothing but his own ease and safety, as if his religion made him sour and morose, and ill-natured. Thus are the ways and people of God oft misrepresented by the devil and his agents.

4. A challenge given to make a further trial of Job's integrity, ver. 5. *Put forth thine hand now* (for I find my hand too short to reach him, and too weak to hurt him) and *touch his bone and his flesh*, (that is with him the only tender part, *made him sick with smiting him*, Mich. vi. 13.) and then I dare say, *he will curse thee to thy face*, and let go his integrity. Satan knew it, and we find it by experience, that nothing is more likely to ruffle the thoughts, and put the mind into disorder, than acute pain and distemper of body. There is no disputing against sense. St Paul himself had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have born it without special grace from Christ, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.

5. A permission granted to Satan to make this trial, ver. 6. Satan would have God put forth his hand and do it, but he *afflicts not willingly*, nor takes any pleasure in *grieving the children of men*, much less his own children, Lam. iii. 33. And therefore if it must be done, let Satan do it, who delights in such work, *he is in thine hand*, do thy worst at him; but with a proviso and limitation, *only save his life*, or his soul. Afflict him, but not to death. Satan hunted for the precious life, would have taken that, if he might, in hopes that dying agonies would have forced Job to curse his God; but God had mercy in store for Job after this trial, and therefore he must survive it, and however he is afflicted, must have his life given him for a prey. If God did not chain up the roaring lion, how soon would he devour us! As far as he permits the wrath of Satan and wicked men to proceed against his people, he will make it turn to his praise and theirs, and *the remainder thereof he will restrain*, Psal. lxxvi. 10. Save his soul, i. e. his reason, so some: Preserve to him the use of that, for otherwise it will be no fair trial: If in his delirium he should curse God, that will be no disproof of his integrity. It would not be the language of his heart, but of his distemper.

Job, in being thus maligned by Satan, was a type of Christ, the first prophecy of whom was, that Satan should *bruise his heel*, Gen. iii. 15. and so he was foiled, as in Job's case. Satan tempted him to let go his integrity, his adoption, Mat. iv. 4. *If thou be the Son of God.* He entered into the heart of Judas that betrayed Christ, and (some think) with his terrors put Christ into his agony in the garden: He had permission to touch his bone and his flesh, without exception of his life, because by dying he was to do that which Job could not do; *destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.*

7. ¶ So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown. 8. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. 9. ¶ Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die. 10. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh: what? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.



The devil having got leave to tear and worry poor Job, presently fell to work with him, as a tormenter first, and then a tempter: his own children he tempts first, and draws them to sin, and afterwards torments when thereby he has brought them to ruin; but this child of God he tormented with affliction, and then tempted to make an ill use of his affliction. That which he aimed at was to make Job curse God; now here we are told what course he took both to move him to it, and move it to him; both to give him the provocation, else it would be to no purpose to urge him to it, and to give him the information, else he would not have thought of it: thus artfully is the temptation managed with all the subtilty of the old serpent, who is here playing the same game against Job that he played against our first parents, *Gen. iii.* aiming to seduce him from his allegiance to his God, and to rob him of his integrity.

1. He provokes him to curse God, by smiting him with sore boils, and so making him a burden to himself, *ver. 7, 8.* The former attack was extremely violent, but Job kept his ground, bravely made good the pass, and carried the day: yet he is still but girding on the harness, there is worse behind; the clouds return after the rain; Satan, by the divine permission, follows his blow, and now deep calls unto deep.

(1.) The disease was very grievous with which Job was seized, Satan *smote him with boils, sore boils*, all over him, from head to foot; with an evil inflammation, so some render it; an erysipelas perhaps in a higher degree. One boil when it is gathering is torment enough, and gives a man abundance of pain and uneasiness. What a condition was Job then in, that had boils all over him, and no part free, and those of as raging a heat as the devil could make them, and as it were *set on fire of hell!* The small-pox is a very grievous and painful disease, and would be much more terrible than it is, but that we know the extremity of it ordinarily lasts but a few days; how grievous then was Job's disease, who was smitten all over him, not with pocks, (or poulks, as we call them) but with sore boils, or grievous ulcers, which make him sick at heart, put him to exquisite torture, and being overspread with them he could lay himself no way for any ease. If at any time we be exercised with sore and grievous distempers, let us not think ourselves dealt with any otherwise than as God has sometimes dealt with the best of his saints and servants. We know not how much Satan may have a hand (by divine permission) in the diseases with which the children of men, and especially the children of God, are afflicted, what infections that prince of the air may spread, what inflammations may come from that fiery serpent. We read of one whom Satan had bound many years, *Luke xiii. 16.* Should God suffer that roaring lion to have his will against any of us, how miserable would he soon make us!

(2.) His management of himself in this distemper was very strange, *ver. 8.* (1.) Instead of healing salves he took a potsherd, a piece of a broken pitcher, *to scrape himself withal*: a very sad pass this man was come to. When a man is sick and sore he may bear it the better, if he be well tended and carefully looked after: many rich people have with a soft and tender hand charitably ministered to the poor in such a condition as this; even Lazarus had some ease from the tongues of the dogs that came and *licked his sores*; but poor Job has no help afforded him. (1.) Nothing is done at his sores but what he doth himself, with his own hands: His children and servants are all dead, his wife unkind, *chap. xix. 17.* He has not wherewithal to see a physician or surgeon, and (which is most sad of all) none of those he had formerly been kind to, had so much sense of honour and gratitude as to minister to him in his distress, and lend him a hand to dress or wipe his running sores, either because the disease was loathsome and noisome, or because they apprehended it infectious. Thus it was in the former days, at it will be in the last days; Men were *lovers of their own selves, unthankful, and without natural affection.* (2.) Nothing is done at his sores but only to *scrape them*; they are not bound up with soft rags, not mollified with ointment, not washed or kept clean, no healing plasters laid on them, no opiates, no anodynes ministered to the poor patient, to alleviate the pain, and compose him to rest, nor any cordials to support his spirits, all the operation is the scraping of his ulcers, which when they were come to a head, and began to die, made his body all over like a scurf, as is usual in the end of the small-pox. It would have been an endless thing to dress his boils one by one, he therefore resolves thus to do it by wholesale, a remedy which one would think as bad as the disease. (3.) He has nothing to do this with but a potsherd, no surgeon's instrument proper for the purpose, but that which would rather rake into his wounds, and add to his pain, than give him any ease. People that are sick and sore have need to be under the discipline and direction of others, for many times they are but ill managers of themselves.

(2.) Instead of reposing himself in a soft and warm bed, he *sat down among the ashes.* Probably he had a bed left him, for tho' his fields were stripped, we do not find that his house was burnt, or plundered, but he chose to sit in the ashes, either because he was weary of his bed, or, because he would put himself into the place and posture of a penitent, who, in token of his self-abhorrence, lay in dust and ashes, *chap. xlii. 6. Isa. lviii. 5. Jon. iii. 6.* Thus did he humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and bring

his mind to the meanness and poverty of his condition. He complains, *chap. vii. 5.* that his flesh was *clothed with worms*; and *clods of dust*; and therefore *dust to dust, ashes to ashes.* If God lay him among the ashes, there he will contentedly sit down: a low spirit becomes low circumstances, and will help to reconcile us to them. The LXX reads it, *he sat down upon a dunghill without the city*, which is commonly said in mentioning this story, but the original saith no more but that he sat *in the midst of the ashes*, which he might do in his own house.

2. He puts him in the head to curse God, by the persuasions of his own wife, *ver. 9.* The Jews (who covet much to be wife above what is written) say that Job's wife was Dinah; Jacob's daughter; so the Chaldee paraphrase. It is not likely she was; but whoever it was, she was to him like Michal to David, a scoffer at his piety. She was spared to him, when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose; to be a troubler and tempter to him. If Satan leaves any thing that he has permission to take away, it is with a design of mischief. It is policy to send his temptations by the hand of those that are dear to us, as he tempted Adam by Eve, and Christ by Peter. We must therefore carefully watch that we be not drawn to say or do an ill thing, by the influence, interest, or intreaty, of any, no not those for whose opinion and favour we have never so great a value. Observe how strong this temptation was.

1. She banters Job for his constancy in his religion, *Doest thou still retain thine integrity?* Art thou so very obstinate in thy religion that nothing will cure thee of it? So tame and sheepish as thus to truckle to a God, that is so far from rewarding thy services with marks of his favour, that he seems to take a pleasure in making thee miserable; strips thee and whips thee without any provocation given? Is this a God to be still loved, and blessed, and served!

*Doest thou not see that thy devotion's vain?  
What have thy prayers procured but woe and pain?  
Hast thou not yet thine interest understood?  
Perversely righteous and absurdly good?  
Those painful sores, and all thy losses show  
How heaven regards the foolish saint below:  
Incorrigibly pious! can't thy God  
Reform thy stupid virtue with his rod?*

Sir. R. Blackmore.

Thus Satan still endeavours to draw men from God, as he did our first parents, by suggesting hard thoughts of him, as one that envies the happiness and delights in the misery of his creatures, than which nothing more false. Another artifice he useth, is to drive men from their religion by loading them with scoffs and reproaches for their adherence to it: we have reason to expect it, but we are fools if we heed it, our master himself has undergone it, we shall be abundantly recompensed for it, and with much more reason may we retort it upon the scoffers; are ye such fools as still to retain your impiety, when you might *bless God and live?*

2. She urgeth him to renounce his religion; to blaspheme God, set him at defiance, and dare him to do his worst, *curse God and die*; live no longer in dependence upon God, wait not for relief from him, but be thine own deliverer by being thine own executioner, end thy troubles by ending thy life, better die once than be always dying thus; thou mayest now despair of having any help from thy God, even curse him and hang thy self. These are two of the blackest and most horrid of all Satan's temptations; and yet such as good men have sometimes been violently assaulted with: nothing more contrary to natural conscience than blaspheming God, nor to natural sense than self-murder; therefore the suggestion of either of these may well be suspected to come immediately from Satan: Lord, lead us not into temptation, not into such, not into any temptation, but *deliver us from the evil one.*

3. He bravely resists and overcomes the temptation, *ver. 10.* He soon gave her an answer, (for Satan spared him the use of his tongue, in hopes he would curse God with it) which shewed his constant resolution to cleave to God, to keep his good thoughts of him, and not to let go his integrity.

See, 1. How he resented the temptations; he took it very heartily to have such a thing mentioned to him; what? curse God? I abhor the thought of it; *get thee behind me, Satan.* In other cases Job reasoned with his wife with a great deal of mildness, even when she was unkind to him, *chap. xix. 17. I entreated her for the children's sake of my own body.* But when she persuaded him to curse God, he was much displeased: *thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh.* He doth not call her a fool; and an atheist, nor break out into any indecent expressions of his displeasure, as those who are sick and sore are apt to do, and think they may be excused; but he shews her the evil of what she said, that she spoke the language of the infidels and idolaters, who when they are *hardly bestead fret themselves and curse their king, and their God, Isa. viii. 21.* We have reason to suppose in such a pious household as Job had, his wife was one that had been well affected to religion, yet now when all their estate and comforts were gone, she could not bear the loss with that temper of mind that Job had: but that she should go about to infect his

mind



mind with the distemper of her's, was a great provocation to him, and he could not forbear thus shewing his resentment. Note, 1. Those are angry and sin not, that are angry only at sin, and take a temptation as the greatest affront; who *cannot bear them that are evil*, Rev. ii. 2. When Peter was a Satan to Christ, he told him plainly, *thou art an offence to me*. 2. If those that we think wise and good, at any time speak that which is foolish and bad, we ought to reprove them faithfully for it, and shew them the evil of what they say, that we suffer not sin upon them. 3. Temptations to curse God ought to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence, and not so much as to be parlyed with: whoever persuades us to that must be looked upon as our enemy, to whom if we yield it is at our peril. Job did not curse God, and then think to come off with Adam's excuse, *the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she persuaded me to it*, Gen. iii. 12. which had in it a tacit reflection on God, his ordinance and providence; no, if thou scornest, if thou cursest, thou alone shall bear it.

2. How he reasoned against the temptation, *shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?* Those whom we reprove we must endeavour to convince, and it is no hard matter to give a reason why we should still hold fast our integrity, even when we are stripped of every thing else. He considers that tho' good and evil are contraries, yet they do not come from contrary causes, but both from the hand of God, *Isa. xlv. 7. Lam. iii. 37.* and therefore in both we must have our eye up unto him, with thankfulness for the good he sends, and without fretfulness at the evil. Observe the force of his argument.

(1.) What he argues for, not only the bearing, but the receiving of evil. *Shall we not receive evil, i. e. (1.) Shall we not expect to receive it? If God give us so many good things, shall we be surprised, or think it strange, if he sometimes afflict us, when he has told us that prosperity and adversity are set the one over-against the other? 1 Pet. iv. 12. (2.) Shall we not address ourselves to receive it aright; the word signifies to receive as a gift, and notes a pious affection and disposition of soul under our afflictions, neither despising them nor fainting under them, accounting them gifts, Phil. i. 29. accepting them as punishments of our iniquity, Lev. xxvi. 41. acquiescing in the will of God in them, let him do with me as seemeth him good, and accommodating ourselves to them, as those that know how to want as well as how to abound, Phil. iv. 12. When the heart is humbled, and weaned by humbling, weaning providences, then we receive correction, Zech. iii. 2. and take up our cross.*

(2.) What he argues from: shall we receive so much good as has come to us from the hand of God, during all those years of peace and prosperity that we have lived, and shall we not now receive evil, when God thinks fit to lay it on us? Note, The consideration of the mercies we receive from God, both past and present, should make us receive our afflictions with a suitable disposition of spirit. If we receive our share of the common good in the seven years of plenty, shall we not receive our share of the common evil in the years of famine? *Qui sentit commodum sentire debet & onus.* If we have so much that pleaseth us, why should we not be content with that which pleaseth God? If we receive so many comforts, shall we not receive some afflictions, which will serve as foils to our comforts, to make them the more valuable? We are taught the worth of mercies, by being made to want them sometimes; and as allays to our comforts, to make them the less dangerous, to keep the balance even, and to prevent our being *lifted up above measure*, 2 Cor. xii. 7. If we receive so much good for the body, shall we not receive some good for the soul? That is, some affliction, by which we partake of God's holiness, *Heb. xii. 10.* Something which by saddening the countenance makes the heart better. Let murmuring therefore as well as boasting, be for ever excluded.

4. Thus in a good measure Job still held fast his integrity, and Satan's design against him was defeated. *In all this did not Job sin with his lips*; he not only said this well, but all he said at this time was under the government of religion and right reason: in the midst of all these grievances he did not speak a word amiss; and we have no reason to think but that he also preserved a good temper of mind, so that tho' there might be some stirrings and risings of corruption in his heart, yet grace got the upper hand, and he took care that the root of bitterness might not spring up to trouble him, *Heb. xii. 15.* The abundance of his heart was for God, produced good things, and suppressed the evil that was there, which was out-voted by the better side. If he did think any evil, yet he *laid his hand upon his mouth*, (Prov. xxx. 32.) stifled the evil thought, and let it go no further; by which it appeared not only that he had true grace, but that it was strong, and victorious; in short, that he had not forfeited the character of a *perfect and upright man*, for so he appears to be, who, in the midst of such temptation, *offends not in word*, Jam. iii. 2. Psal. xvii. 3.

11. ¶ Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn

with him, and to comfort him. 12. And when they lift up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept, and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. 13. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days, and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

We have here an account of the kind visit which Job's three friends made him in his affliction. The news of his extraordinary troubles spread into all parts, he being an eminent man, both for greatness and goodness, and the circumstances of his troubles being very uncommon, some that were his enemies triumphed in his calamities, chap. xvi. 10.—xix. 18.—xxx. 1, &c. Perhaps they made ballads of him; but his friends concerned themselves for him, and endeavoured to comfort him; *a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* Three of them are here named, ver. 11. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We shall meet with a fourth after, who, it should seem, was present at the whole conference, viz. Elihu; whether he came as a friend of Job, or only as an auditor, doth not appear: these three are said to be his friends, his intimate acquaintance, as David and Solomon had each of them one in their court that was called the king's friend. These three were eminently wise and good men, as appears by their discourses; they were old men, very old, and had a great reputation for knowledge, and a mighty deference was paid to their judgment, chap. xxxii. 6. It is probable they were men of figure in their country, princes, or heads of houses. Now observe,

1. That Job in his prosperity had contracted a friendship with them: if they were his equals, yet he had not that jealousy of them; if his inferiors, yet he had not that disdain of them which was any hindrance to an intimate converse and correspondence with them: and to have such friends adds more to his happiness in the day of his prosperity, than all the head of cattle he was master of. Much of the comfort of this life lies in acquaintance and friendship with those that are prudent and virtuous, and he that has a few such friends ought to be choice of them. Job's three friends are supposed to be all of them of the posterity of Abraham, which for some descents, even in the families that were shut out from the covenant of peculiarity, retained some good fruits of that pious education which the Father of the Faithful gave to those under his charge. Eliphaz descended from Teman, the grandson of Esau, Gen. xxxvi. 11. Bildad (it is probable) from Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah, Gen. xxv. 2. Zophar is thought by some to be the same with Zepho, a descendant from Esau, Gen. xxxvi. 11. The preserving of so much wisdom and piety among those that were strangers to the covenants of promise, was a happy presage of God's grace to the Gentiles, when the partition-wall should in the latter days be taken down. Esau was rejected, yet many that came from him inherited some of the best blessings.

2. That they continued their friendship with Job in his adversity, when most of his friends had forsaken him, chap. xix. 14. Two ways they shewed their friendship.

1. By the kind visit they made him in his affliction, to mourn with him, and to comfort him, ver. 11. Probably, they had been wont to visit him in his prosperity, not to hunt or hawk with him, not to dance or play at cards with him, but to entertain and edify themselves with his learned and pious converse; and now he was in adversity they come to share with him in his griefs, as formerly they had come to share with him in his comforts. These were wise men whose heart was in the house of mourning, Eccl. vii. 4. Visiting the afflicted, sick or sore, fatherless or childless, in their sorrow, is made a branch of *pure religion and undefiled*, Jam. i. 27. and if done from a good principle, will be abundantly recompensed shortly, Matth. xxv. 36. By visiting the sons and daughters of affliction we may contribute to the improvement, (1.) Of our own graces; for many a good lesson is to be learned from the trouble of others; we may look upon them and receive instruction, and be made wise and serious. (2.) Of their comforts: by putting a respect upon them, we encourage them, and some good word may be spoken to them, which may help to make them easy. Job's friends came, not to satisfy their curiosity with an account of his troubles, and the strangeness of the circumstances of them; much less as David's false friends, to make invidious remarks upon him, Psal. xli. 6, 7, 8. but to mourn with him, to mingle their tears with his, and so to comfort him. It is much more pleasant to visit those in affliction to whom comfort belongs, than those to whom we must first speak conviction.

Concerning these visitants observe, (1.) That they were not sent for, but came of their own accord; (chap. vi. 22.) whence Mr Caryl observes, that *it is good manners to be an unbidden guest at the house of mourning*, and in comforting our friends to prevent their invitations. (2.) That they made an appointment to come. Note, Good people should make appointments among themselves for doing good, so exciting and obliging one another to it, and assisting and encouraging one another in it. For the carrying



carrying on of any pious design, let hand join in hand. (3.) That they came with a design (and we have reason to think it was a sincere design) to comfort him, and yet proved miserable comforters, thro' their unskilful management of his case. Many that aim well, by mistake come short of their aim.

2. By their tender sympathy with him, and concern for him in his affliction, when they saw him at some distance, he was so disfigured and deformed with his sores, that *they knew him not*, ver. 12. His face was *foul with weeping*, chap. xvi. 16. like Jerusalem's Nazarites that had been *ruddy as the rubies*, but were now *blacker than a coal*, Lam. iv. 7, 8. What a change will a sore disease, or without that, an oppressing care and grief, make in the countenance in a little time! *Is this Naomi?* Ruth i. 19. So, *Is this Job?* How art thou fallen! How is thy glory stained and sullied, and all thine honour laid in the dust! God fit us for such changes!

Observing him thus miserably altered, they did not leave him in a fright, or loathing, but expressed so much the more tenderness towards him.

1. Coming to mourn with him, they vented their undissembled grief in all the then usual expressions of that passion; they wept aloud; the sight of them, as is usual, revived Job's grief, and set him a weeping afresh, which fetched floods of tears from their eyes. They rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, as men that would strip themselves, and abase themselves with their friend that was stripped and abased.

2. Coming to comfort him, they sat down with him upon the ground, for so he received visits; and they, not in compliment to him, but in true compassion, put themselves into the same humble and uneasy place and posture. They had many a time, it is likely, sitten with him on his couches, and at his table in his prosperity, and were therefore willing to share with him in his grief and poverty, because they had shared with him in his joy and plenty. It was not a modish, short visit that they made him, just to look upon him and be gone, but as those that could have no enjoyment of themselves, if they had returned to their place, while their friend was in so much misery, they resolved to stay with him till they saw him mend or end, and therefore took lodgings near him, tho' he was not now able to entertain them as he had done, and they must therefore lie at their own charges. Every day, for seven days together, at the hours in which he admitted company, they came and sat with him, as his companions in tribulation, and exceptions from that rule, *Nullus ad admittas ibit amicus opes*. They that are poor have few friends.

They sat with him, but none spake a word to him, only they all attended to the particular narratives he gave of his troubles. They were silent, as men astonished and amazed; *Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*.

*So long a time they held their peace, to show,  
A reverence due to such prodigious woe.*

Sir R. Blackmore.

They spake not a word to him, whatever they said one to another, by way of instruction, for the improvement of the present providence. They said nothing to that purpose that afterwards they spoke a great deal to; nothing to grieve him, (chap. iv. 2.) because they saw his grief was very great already, and they were loth at first to add affliction to the afflicted. There is a time to keep silence, when either *the wicked is before us*, and by speaking we may harden them, *Psal. xxxix. 1.* or when by speaking we may offend the generation of God's children, *Psal. lxxiii. 15.* Their not entering upon the following solemn discourses till the seventh day, may perhaps intimate that it was the sabbath-day, which doubtless was observed in the patriarchal age, and to that day they adjourned the intended conference, because probably then company resorted, as usual, to Job's house, to join with him in his devotions, who might be edified by the discourse. Or rather, by their silence, so long they would intimate, that what they afterwards said, was well considered and digested, and the result of many thoughts. *The heart of the wise studies to answer.* We should think twice before we speak once, especially in such a case as this, think long, and we shall be the better able to speak short, and to the purpose.

### C H A P. III.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, *saith the apostle*, Jam. v.

11. *So we have, and of his impatience too: We admired that a man should be so patient as he was*, chap. i. and ii. *but we admire that a good man should be so impatient as he is here in this chapter, where we find him cursing his day, and, in passion, (1.) Complaining that he was born*, ver. 1—10. (2.) *Complaining that he did not die as soon as he was born*, ver. 11—19. (3.) *Complaining that his life was now continued when he was in misery*, ver. 20—26. In this it must be owned that Job sinned with his lips, and it is written not for our imitation, but our admonition, that he who thinks he stands, may take heed, lest he fall.

No. XXXV.

1. **A**FTER this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day. 2. And Job spake and said, 3. Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man-child conceived. 4. Let that day be darkness, let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. 5. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it, let a cloud dwell upon it, let the blackness of the day terrify it. 6. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it, let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. 7. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein. 8. Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning. 9. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark, let it look for light, but have none, neither let it see the dawning of the day: 10. Because it shut not up the doors of my mothers womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.

Long was Job's heart hot within him, and while he was musing the fire burned; and the more for being stifled and suppressed, and at the length he spake with his tongue, but not such a good word as David spake after a long pause, *Lord make me to know my end*, *Psal. xxxix. 3, 4.* Seven days the prophet Ezekiel sat down astonished with the captives, and then (probably on the sabbath-day) *the word of the Lord came to him*, Ezek. iii. 15, 16. So long Job and his friends sat thinking, but said nothing; they were afraid of speaking what they thought, lest they should grieve him; and he durst not give vent to his thoughts, lest he should offend them. They came to comfort him, but finding his afflictions so very extraordinary, they began to think comfort did not belong to him, suspecting him an hypocrite, and therefore said nothing: But losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore Job gives vent first to his thoughts, and unless they had been better, it had been well if he had kept them to himself.

In short, he cursed his day, the day of his birth, wished he had never been born, could not think or speak of his own birth without regret and vexation. Whereas men usually observe the annual return of their birth-day with rejoicing, he looked upon it as the unhappiest day of the year, because the unhappiest of his life, being the inlet into all this woe.

Now, 1. This was bad enough: The extremity of his trouble, and the discomposure of his spirits, may excuse it in part, but he can by no means be justified in it. Now he has forgotten the good he was born to, the lean kine have eaten up the fat ones, and he is filled with thoughts of the evil only, and wishes he had never been born. The prophet Jeremiah himself expressed his repentment of his calamities, in language not much unlike this; not only, *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me!* Jer. xv. 10. But *cursed be the day wherein I was born*, Jer. xx. 14, &c. We may suppose that Job in his prosperity had many a time blessed God for the day of his birth, and reckoned it a happy day, yet now he brands it with all possible marks of infamy. When we consider the iniquity in which we were conceived and born, we have reason enough to reflect with sorrow and shame upon the day of our birth, and to say that the day of our death, by which we are freed from sin, (Rom. vii. 7.) is far better, Eccl. vii. 1. But to curse the day of our birth, because then we entered upon the calamitous scene of life, is to quarrel with the God of nature, to despise the dignity of our being, and to indulge a passion which our own calm and sober thoughts will make us ashamed of. Certainly there is no condition of life a man can be in in this world, but he may in it (if it be not his own fault) so honour God, and work out his own salvation, and make sure a happiness for himself in a better world, that he will have no reason at all to wish he had never been born, but a great deal of reason to say, he had his being to good purpose: Yet it must be owned, if there were not another life after this, and divine consolations to support us in the prospects of it, so many are the sorrows and troubles of this that we might sometimes be tempted to say we were *made in vain*, *Psal. lxxxix. 47.* and to wish we had never been. There are those in hell that with good reason wish they had never been born, as Judas, *Mat. xxvi. 24.* But on this side hell there can be no reason for so vain and ungrateful a wish. It was Job's folly and weakness to curse his day, we must say of it, this was his infirmity; but good men have sometimes failed in the exercise of those graces they have been most eminent for, that we may understand that when they are said to be perfect, it is meant they were upright, not that they were sinless. Lastly, let us observe it, to the honour of the spiritual life above the natural, that tho' many have cursed the day of their first birth, never any cursed the day of their new-birth, nor wished they never had had grace, and the spirit of grace given them: Those are the most excellent gifts, above life and being it self, and which will never be a burden.



2. Yet it was not so bad as Satan promised himself: He cursed his day, but he did not curse his God, was weary of his life, and would gladly have parted with that, but not weary of his religion, he resolutely cleaves to that, and will never let it go. The dispute between God and Satan concerning Job, was not whether Job had his infirmities, and whether he was subject to like passions as we are, that was granted; but whether he was an hypocrite, and secretly hated God, and if he were provoked would shew it; and upon trial it proved he was no such man. Nay, All this may consist with his being a pattern of patience, for tho' he did thus speak unadvisedly with his lips, yet both before and after he expressed great submission and resignation to the holy will of God, and repented of his impatience: He condemned himself for it, and therefore God did not condemn him, nor must we, but watch the more carefully over our selves, lest we sin after the similitude of this transgression.

The particular expressions which Job used in cursing his day, are full of poetical fancy, flame and rapture; and create as much difficulty to the critics, as the thing it self doth to the divines: We need not be particular in our observations upon them.

When he would express his passionate wish that he had never been, he falls foul upon the day, and,

1. He wished that earth might *forget it; let it perish*, ver. 3. *Let it not be joined to the days of the year*, ver. 6. Let it be not only not inserted in the calendar in red letters, as the day of the king's nativity useth to be, (and Job was a king, chap. 29. ult.) but let it be rased and blotted out, and buried in oblivion. Let not the world know that ever such a man as I was born into it, and lived in it, who am made such a spectacle of misery.

2. That Heaven might *frown upon it. Let not God regard it from above*, ver. 4. Every thing is indeed as it is with God; that day is honourable on which he puts honour, and which he distinguisheth and crowns with his favour and blessing, as he did the seventh day of the week; but let my birth-day never be so honoured, let it be *nigro carbone notandus*, marked for an evil day by him that determines the times before appointed. The Father and Fountain of light appointed the greater light to rule the day, and lesser lights to rule the night, but let that want the benefit of both. (1.) *Let that day be darkness*, ver. 4. and if the light of the day be darkness, *how great is that darkness!* How terrible, because then we look for light. Let the gloominess of the day represent Job's condition, whose sun went down at noon. (2.) As for that night too, let it want the benefit of moon and stars, and *let darkness seize upon it*, thick darkness, darkness that may be felt, which will not befriend the repose of the night by its silence, but rather disturb it with its terrors.

3. That all joy might forsake it. Let it be a melancholy night, solitary, and not a merry night, of musick or dancing, *let no joyful voice come therein*, ver. 7. Let it be a long night, and not *see the eye-lids of the morning*, (ver. 9.) which bring joy with them.

4. That all curses might *follow it*, ver. 8. Let none ever desire to see it; or bid it welcome when it comes, but, on the contrary, *Let them curse it that curse the day*. Whatever day any are tempted to curse, let them at the same time bestow one curse upon my birth-day; particularly those that make it their trade to raise up mourning at funerals with their ditties of lamentation. Let them that curse the day of others death, in the same breath curse the day of my birth. Or, those who are so fierce and daring as to be ready to raise up the Leviathan, for that is the word here; who being about to strike the whale or crocodile, curse it with the bitterest curse they can invent, hoping by those incantations to weaken it, and so to make themselves masters of it. Probably some such custom might there be used, to which our divine poet alludes. Let it be as odious as *the day wherein men bewail the greatest misfortune*, or the time *wherein they see the most dreadful apparition*: So bishop Patrick, I suppose, taking the Leviathan here to signify the devil, as others do, who understand it of the curses used by conjurers and magicians in raising the devil, or, when they have raised a devil that they cannot lay.

But what is the ground of Job's quarrel with the day and night of his birth? It is *because it shut not up the doors of his mother's womb*, ver. 10. See the folly and madness of a passionate discontent, and how absurdly and extravagantly it talks, when the reins are laid in the neck of it. Is this Job, who was so much admired for his wisdom, that *unto him men gave ear, and kept silence at his counsel*, and *after his words they spake not again*, chap. xxix. 21, 22. Sure his wisdom failed him, (1.) When he took so much pains to express his desire that he had never been born, which at the best was a vain wish, for it is impossible to make that which has been not to have been. (2.) When he was so liberal of his curses upon a day and a night, that could not be hurt, or made ever the worse for his curses. (3.) When he wished a thing so very barbarous to his own mother, as that she might not have brought him forth, when her full time was come; which must inevitably have been her death, and a miserable death. (4.) When he despised the goodness of God to him, in giving him a being, such a being, so noble and excellent a life, such a life, so far above that of any other creature in this lower world, and undervalued the gift, as not worth the acceptance, only because (*transiit cum*

*onere*) it was clogged with a proviso of trouble, which now at length came upon him, after many years enjoyment of its pleasures. What a foolish thing it was to wish that his eyes had never seen the light, that so they might not have seen sorrow, which yet he might hope to see through, and beyond which he might see joy. Did Job believe and hope that he should *in his flesh see God at the latter day*, chap. xix. 26. and yet would he wish he never had had a being capable of such a bliss, only because for the present he had sorrow in the flesh? God by his grace arms us against this foolish and hurtful lust of impatience.

11. Why died I not from the womb? *why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?* 12. Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck? 13. For now should I have lain still, and been quiet, I should have slept; then had I been at rest; 14. With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves: 15. Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: 16. Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants *which* never saw light. 17. There the wicked cease *from* troubling: and there the weary be at rest. 18. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. 19. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master.

Job perhaps, reflecting upon himself for his folly, in wishing he had never been born, follows it, and thinks to mend it with another little better, that he had died as soon as he was born, which he enlargeth upon in these verses. When our Saviour would set forth a very calamitous state of things, he seems to allow such a saying as this, *Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck*, Luke xxiii. 29. but blessing the barren womb is one thing, and cursing the fruitful womb is another; it is good to make the best of afflictions, but it is not good to make the worst of mercies: Our rule is, *Bless, and curse not*.

Life is often put for all good, and death for all evil, yet Job here very absurdly complains of life and its supports, as a curse and plague to him, and envies death and the grave, as the greatest and most desirable bliss. Surely Satan was deceived in Job, when he applied that maxim to him, *All that a man has will he give for his life*; for never any man valued life at a lower rate than he did.

1. He ungratefully quarrels with life, and is angry that it was not taken from him as soon as it was given him, ver. 11, 12. *Why died not I from the womb?* See here, (1.) What a weak and helpless creature man is, when he comes into the world, and how slender the thread of life is when it is first drawn. We are ready to die from the womb, and to breathe our last, as soon as we begin to breathe at all: We can do nothing for our selves, as other creatures can, but should drop into the grave, if the knees did not prevent us, and the lamp of life when first lighted, would go out of it self, if the breasts given us, that we should suck, did not supply it with fresh oil. (2.) What a merciful and tender care divine providence took of us, at our entrance into the world. It was owing to this that *we died not from the womb*, and did not *give up the ghost when we came out of the belly*; why were we not cut off as soon as we were born? Not because we did not deserve it, justly might such weeds have been plucked up as soon as they appeared, justly might such cockatrices have been crushed in the egg; not because we did, or could, take any care of ourselves, and our own safety. No creature comes into the world so shiftless as man: It was not our might, or the power of our hand, that preserved us these beings, but God's power and providence upheld our frail lives, and his pity and patience spared our forfeited lives. It was owing to this that the knees prevented us. Natural affection is put into parents hearts, by the hand of the God of nature: And hence it was, that the blessings of the breast attended those of the womb. (3.) What a great deal of vanity and vexation of spirit attends human life! If we had not a God to serve in this world, and better things to hope for in another world, considering the faculties we are endued with, and the troubles we are surrounded with, we should be strongly tempted to wish that we had *died from the womb*, which had prevented a great deal both of sin and misery. *He that is born to-day, and dies to-morrow, loseth some hours of joy, but months of sorrow*. (4.) The evil of impatience, fretfulness, and discontent, when it thus prevails it is unreasonable and absurd, it is impious and ungrateful; it is slighting and undervaluing God's favour. How much soever life is embittered, we must say it was of the Lord's mercies that we died not from the womb, that we were not consumed. It is contradicting the common sense and sentiments of mankind, and our own at another time: Let discontented people declaim never so much against life, they will be loth to part with it when it comes to the setting to. When the old man in the fable, being tired with his burden, threw it down in discontent, and called for death, and death came to him, and asked him what he would



would have with him, he then answered, nothing, but help me up with my burthen.

2. He passionately applauds death and the grave, and seems hugely in love with them. To desire to die that we may be with Christ, that we may be free from sin, and that we may be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, is the effect and evidence of grace; but to desire to die only that we may be quiet in the grave, and delivered from the troubles of this life, favours of corruption. Job's considerations here may be of good use to reconcile us unto death when it comes, and to make us easy under the arrests of it, but they ought not to be made use of, as a pretence to quarrel with life while it is continued, or to make us uneasy under the burthens of it. It is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, be it living or dying, and so to live to the Lord, and die to the Lord, and to be his in both, Rom. xiv. 8.

Job here frets himself with thinking that if he had but died as soon as he was born, and been carried from the womb to the tomb.

1. His condition would have been as good as that of the best. I should have been (saith he, ver. 14.) *with kings and counsellors of the earth*, whose pomp, power, and policy, cannot set them out of the reach of death, nor secure them from the grave, nor distinguish theirs from common dust in the grave. Even princes that had gold in abundance could not with it bribe death to overlook them when he came with commission, and tho' they filled their houses with silver, yet they were forced to leave it all behind them, no more to return to it. Some, by the desolate places which the kings and counsellors are here said to build for themselves, understand the sepulchres or monuments they prepared for themselves in their life-time; as Shebna, *Isa. xxii. 16. bewed him out a sepulchre*; and by the gold which the princes had, and the silver with which they filled their houses, they understand the treasures which, they say, it was usual to deposit in the graves of great men. Such arts have men used to preserve their dignity, if possible, on the other side death, and to keep themselves from lying even with those of inferior rank; but it will not do, death is and will be an irresistible leveller, *mors sceptrum ligonibus æquat. Rich and poor meet together in the grave*, and there, a *hidden untimely birth*, (ver. 16.) a child that either never saw light, or but just opened its eyes, and peeped into the world, and, not liking it, closed them again, and hastened out of it, lies as soft and easy, lies as high and safe, as kings and counsellors, and princes that had gold; and therefore, saith Job, would I had lain there in the dust, rather than live to lie here in the ashes.

2. His condition would have been much better than now it was, ver. 13. *Then should I have lain still, and been quiet*, which now I cannot do, I cannot be, but am still tossing, and unquiet: then I should have slept, whereas now sleep departeth from mine eyes; then had I been at rest, whereas now I am restless. Now life and immortality are brought to a much clearer light by the gospel than before they were placed in; good Christians can give a better account than this of the gain of death, then should I have been present with the Lord, then should I have seen his glory face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly: but all that poor Job dreamed of was rest and quietness in the grave, out of the fear of evil tidings, and out of the feeling of sore boils. Then should I have been quiet, and had he kept his temper, his even easy temper still, which he was in, in the two foregoing chapters, entirely resigned to the holy will of God, and acquiescing in it, he might have been quiet now; his soul at least might have dwelt at ease, even when his body lay in pain, *Psal. xxv. 13.*

Observe how finely he describes the repose of the grave; which (provided the soul also be at rest in God) may much assist our triumphs over it.

1. Those that now are troubled will there be out of the reach of trouble, ver. 17. *There the wicked cease from troubling*: when persecutors die they can no longer persecute, their *hatred and envy is now perished*. Herod had vexed the church, but when he became a prey for worms, he ceased from troubling. When the persecuted die, they are out of the danger of being any further troubled. Had Job been at rest in his grave, he had had no disturbance from the Sabeans and Chaldeans, none of all his enemies had created him any trouble.

2. Those that are now toiled will there see the period of their toils; *there the weary are at rest*: heaven is more than a rest to the souls of the saints, but the grave is a rest to their bodies; their pilgrimage is a weary pilgrimage, sin and the world they are weary of. Their services, sufferings, and expectations, they are wearied with, but in the grave they *rest from all their labours*, Rev. xiv. 13. *Isa. lvii. 2.* They are easy there, and make no complaints; there believers sleep in Jesus.

3. Those that were here enslaved are there at liberty: death is the prisoner's discharge, the relief of the oppressed, and the servant's manumission, ver. 18. *There the prisoners tho' they walk not at large, yet they rest together, and are not put to work, to grind in that prison-house.* They are no more insulted and trampled upon, menaced and terrified by their cruel taskmasters, *they hear not the voice of the oppressor*. They that were here doomed to perpetual servitude, that could call nothing their

own, no not their own bodies, are there no longer under command, or control; there the servant is free from his master; which is a good reason why those that have power should use it moderately, and those that are in subjection should bear it patiently, yet a little while.

4. Those that were at a vast distance from all other, there are upon a level, ver. 19. The small and great are there, there the fame, there all one, all alike free among the dead. The tedious pomp and state which attends the great is at an end there, all the inconveniences of a poor and low condition are likewise over, death and the grave know no difference.

*Level'd by death, the conqueror and the slave,  
The wise and foolish, cowards and the brave,  
Lie mix'd and undistinguish'd in the grave.*

Sir. R. Blackmore.

20. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? 21. Which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures? 22. Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? 23. *Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?* 24. For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. 25. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of, is come unto me. 26. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet: yet trouble came.

Job finding it to no purpose to wish either that he had not been born, or had died as soon as he was born, here complains that his life was now continued, and not cut off: when men are set on quarreling there is no end of it, the corrupt heart will carry on the humour: having cursed the day of his birth, here he courts the day of his death. The beginning of this strife and impatience is as the letting forth of water.

1. He thinks it hard in general that miserable lives should be prolonged, ver. 20, 21, 22. *Wherefore is light in life given to them that are bitter in soul?* Bitterness of soul, through spiritual grievances, makes life itself bitter. *Why doth he give light?* So it is in the original: he means God, yet doth not name him, tho' the devil had said, he will curse thee to thy face, but he tacitly reflects on the divine providence as unjust and unkind, in continuing life, when the comforts of life are removed. Life is called light, because pleasant and serviceable for walking and working; it is candle-light, the longer it burns the shorter it goes, and the nearer the socket: this light is said to be given us, for if it were not daily renewed to us by a fresh gift it would be lost. But Job reckons to those that are in misery, it is δῶρον ἀδωρον, gift and no gift, a gift that they had better be without, while the light only serves them to see their own misery by. Such is the vanity of human life, that even it sometimes becomes a vexation of spirit; and so alterable is the property of death, that tho' dreadful to nature, even it may become desirable to nature itself: he speaks of those here, (1.) Who long for death when they have out-lived their comforts and usefulness, are burthened with age and infirmities, with pain or sickness, poverty or disgrace, and yet it comes not, while at the same time it comes to many that dread it, and would put it far from them. The continuance and period of life must be according to God's will, not according to ours. It is not fit we should be consulted how long we would live, and when we would die, our times are in a better hand than our own. (2.) Who dig for it as for hid treasures, i. e. would give any thing for a fair dismissal out of this world, which supposeth that then the thought of men being their own executioners was not so much as entertained or suggested, else those that longed for it needed not take much pains for it, they might soon come at it (as Seneca tells them) if they pleased. (3.) Who bid it welcome, and are glad when they can find the grave, and see themselves stepping into it. If the miseries of this life can prevail contrary to nature, to make death itself desirable, shall not much more the hopes and prospects of a better life, to which death is our passage, make it so, and set us quite above the fear of it? It may be a sin to long for death, but I am sure it is no sin to long for heaven. 2. He thinks himself in particular hardly dealt with, that he might not be eased of his pain and misery by death, when he could not get ease any other way. To be thus impatient of life for the sake of the troubles we meet with, is not only unnatural in itself, but ungrateful to the giver of life, and argues a sinful indulgence of our own passion, and a sinful inconsideration of our future state. Let it be our great and constant care to get ready for another world, and then let us leave it to God to order the circumstances of our removal thither as he thinks fit; Lord, when and how thou pleasest; and this with such an indifferency, that if he should refer it to us, we would refer



refer it to him again. Grace teacheth us in the midst of life's greatest comforts to be willing to die, and in the midst of its greatest crosses to be willing to live.

Job, to excuse himself in this mighty desire he had to die, pleads the little comfort and satisfaction he had in life.

1. In his present afflicted state troubles were continually felt, and were likely to be so. He thought he had cause enough to be weary of living, for, (1.) He had no comfort of his life; *my sighing comes before I eat*, ver. 24. The sorrows of life prevented and anticipated the supports of life; nay, they took away his stomach, and spoiled his appetite to his necessary food. His griefs returned as duly as his meals, and affliction was his daily bread. Nay, so great was the extremity of his pain and anguish, that he did not only sigh but roar, and his roarings were poured out like the waters, in a full and constant stream. Our master was acquainted with grief, and we must expect to be so too. (2.) He had no prospect of bettering his condition, his way was hid, and God had hedged him in, ver. 23. He saw no way open of deliverance, nor knew he what course to take, his way was *hedged up with thorns*, that he could not find his path. See chap. xxiii. 8. Lam. iii. 7.

2. Even in his former prosperous state, troubles were continually feared: so that then he was never easy, ver. 25, 26. He knew so much of the vanity of the world, and the troubles to which of course he was born, that he was not in safety, neither had he rest then. That which made his grief now the more grievous was, that he was not conscious to himself of any great degree of either negligence or security in the day of his prosperity, which might provoke God thus to chastise him. (1.) He had not been negligent and mindless of his affairs, but kept up such a fear of trouble as was necessary to the maintaining of his guard: he was afraid for his children when they were feasting, lest they should offend God, chap. i. 5. afraid for his servants lest they should offend his neighbours, he took all the care he could of his own health, and managed himself and his affairs with all possible precaution, yet all would not do. (2.) He had not been secure, nor indulged himself in ease and softness, had not trusted in his wealth, nor flattered himself with the hopes of the perpetuity of his mirth, yet trouble came, to convince and mind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgot when he lived at ease. Thus his way was hid, for he knew not wherefore God contended with him. Now this consideration, instead of aggravating his grief, might rather serve to alleviate it: nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences for us, that in some measure we did our duty in a day of prosperity: and an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprize, the less it is a terror.

#### CHAP. IV.

*Job having warmly given vent to his passion, and so broken the ice, his friends here come gravely to give vent to their judgment upon his case; which perhaps they communicated to one another apart, compared notes upon it, and talked it over among themselves, and found they were all agreed in their verdict, that Job's afflictions certainly proved him to have been an hypocrite; but they did not attack Job with this high charge, till, by the expressions of his discontent and impatience, in which they thought he reflected on God himself, he had confirmed them in the ill opinion they had before conceived of him, and his character. Now they set upon him with great fear. The dispute begins, and it begins to be hot presently: The opponents are Job's three friends, Job himself is respondent, Elihu appears first as moderator, and at length God himself gives judgment upon the controversy, and the management of it. The question in dispute is, whether Job was an honest man or no? The same question that was in dispute between God and Satan in the two first chapters. Satan had yielded it, and durst not pretend that his cursing of his day was a constructive cursing of his God; no, he cannot deny but that Job still holds fast his integrity: but Job's friends will needs have it, that if Job were an honest man he would not have been thus sorely, and thus tediously, afflicted, and therefore urge him to confess himself an hypocrite in the profession he had made of religion: no, saith Job, that I will never do, I have offended God, but my heart notwithstanding has been upright with him; and still he holds fast the comfort of his integrity. Eliphaz, who, it is likely, was the senior, or of the best quality, begins with him in this chapter: in which, (1.) He bespeaks a patient bearing, ver. 2. (2.) He compliments Job with an acknowledgment of the eminency and usefulness of the profession he had made of religion, ver. 3, 4. (3.) He charges him with hypocrisy in his profession, grounding his charge upon his present troubles and his carriage under them, ver. 5, 6. (4.) To make good the inference, he maintains, that man's wickedness is that which always brings God's judgments, ver. 7—11. (5.) He corroborates his affection by a vision which he had, in which he was minded of the incontestible purity and justice of God, and the meanness, and weakness, and sinfulness, of man, ver. 12—21. By all this he aims to bring down Job's spirit, and to make him both penitent and patient under his afflictions.*

1. **T**HEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2. *If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?* 3. Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. 4. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. 5. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest: it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. 6. *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?*

In these verses,

1. Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is now about to give to Job by his discourse, ver. 2. If we assay a word with thee, offer a word of reproof and counsel, wilt thou be grieved and take it ill? We have reason to fear thou wilt; but there is no remedy, *who can refrain from words?* Observe, (1.) With what modesty he speaks of himself and his own attempt. He will not undertake the management of the cause alone, but very humbly joins his friends with him, we will commune with thee: they that plead God's cause must be glad of help, lest it suffer through their weakness. He will not promise much, but begs leave to assay, or attempt, and try if he could propose any thing that might be pertinent, and suit Job's case. In difficult matters it becomes us to pretend no further, but only to be tried what may be said or done. Many excellent discourses have gone under the modest title of essays. (2.) With what tenderness he speaks of Job, and his present afflicted condition; if we tell thee our mind, wilt thou be grieved? Wilt thou take it ill? Wilt thou lay it to thine own heart, as thine affliction, or to our charge, as our fault? Shall we be reckoned unkind and cruel, if we deal plainly and faithfully with thee? We desire we may not, we hope we shall not, and should be sorry if that should be ill resented which is well intended. Note, We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, *Psal. lxxix. 26*. We should shew ourselves backward to say that which we foresee will be grievous, tho' never so necessary: God himself tho' he afflicts justly, yet he doth not afflict willingly, Lam. iii. 33. (3.) With what assurance he speaks of the truth and pertinency of what he was about to say, *Who can withhold himself from speaking?* Surely it was a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, that laid him under this necessity of speaking: who can forbear speaking in vindication of God's honour, which we hear reprov'd, in love to thy soul which we see endangered? Note, It is foolish pity not to reprove our friends, even our friends in affliction, for what they say or do amiss, only for fear of offending them. Whether men take it well or ill, we must with wisdom and meekness do our duty, and discharge a good conscience.

2. He exhibits a twofold charge against Job.

1. As to his particular carriage under this affliction, he chargeth him with weakness, and faint-heartedness: and that article of his charge there was too much ground for, ver. 3, 4, 5. And here,

(1.) He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. He owns that Job had instructed many, not only his own children and servants, but many others, his neighbours and friends, as many as fell within the sphere of his activity. He did not only encourage those who were teachers by office, and countenance them, and pay for the teaching of those that were poor, but he did himself instruct many: tho' a great man, he did not think it below him; king Solomon was a preacher: tho' a man of business he found time to do it, went among his neighbours, talked to them about their souls, and gave them good counsel. O that this example of Job were imitated by our great men! If he met with those that were ready to fall into sin, or sink under their troubles, his words upheld them: a wonderful dexterity he had in offering that which was proper to fortify persons against temptations, to support them under their burthens, and to comfort afflicted consciences. He had and used the tongue of the learned, knew how to speak a word in season to them that were weary, and employed himself much in that good work. With suitable counsels and comforts he *strengthened the weak hands* for work and service, and the spiritual warfare; and the feeble knees for the bearing up the man in his journey, and under his load. It is our duty not only to *lift up our own hands that hang down*, by quickening and encouraging ourselves in the way of duty, Heb. xii. 12. but we must also strengthen the weak hands of others, as there is occasion, and do what we can to confirm their feeble knees, by saying to them *that are of a fearful heart, be strong*, Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. The expressions seem to be borrowed from hence. Note, They that have abundance of spiritual riches, should abound in spiritual charity. A good word, well and wisely spoken, may do more good than perhaps we think of.

But why doth Eliphaz mention this here? (1.) Perhaps he praiseth him thus for the good he had done, that he might make the intended reproof the more passable with him. Just commendation



commendation is a good preface to a just reprehension, will help to remove prejudices, and will shew that the reproof comes not from ill will. Paul praised the Corinthians before he chid them, 1 Cor. xi. 7. (2.) He remembers how Job had comforted others, as a reason why he might justly expect to be himself comforted, and yet if conviction was necessary, in order to comfort, they must be excused if they applied themselves to that first; the comforter shall reprove, John xvi. 8. (3.) He speaks this perhaps in a way of pity, lamenting it, that, through the extremity of his affliction, he could not apply those comforts to himself which he had formerly administered to others. It is easier to give good counsel than to take it; to preach meekness and patience than to practise them. *Facile omnes cum valemus rectum concilium ægrotis damus.* Terent.

(4.) Most think he mentions it as an aggravation of his present discontent, upbraiding him with his knowledge, and the good offices he had done for others, *q. d.* Thou that hast taught others, why dost thou not teach thy self? Is not this an evidence of thine hypocrisy, that thou hast prescribed that medicine to others which thou wilt not now take thy self, and so contradictest thy self, and actest against thine own principles! Thou that teachest another not to faint, dost thou faint? Rom. ii. 19. Physician heal thy self. They who have rebuked others, must expect to hear of it if they themselves become obnoxious to rebuke.

(2.) He upbraids him with his present low spiritedness, ver. 5. Now it is come upon thee, now it is thy turn to be afflicted; and the bitter cup that goes round is put into thy hand, now it toucheth thee, thou faintest, thou art troubled. Here, (1.) He makes too light of Job's afflictions; it toucheth thee. The very word that Satan himself had used, chap. i. 11.—ii. 5. Had Eliphaz felt but the one half of Job's affliction he would have said, it smites me, it wounds me; but speaking of Job's afflictions, he makes but a flea-bite of it, it touches thee and thou canst not bear to be touched; *noli me tangere.* (2.) He makes too much of Job's resentments, and aggravates them, thou faintest, or, thou art beside thy self, thou ravest, and knowest not what thou sayest. Men in deep distress must have grains of allowance, and a favourable construction put upon what they say; when we make the worst of every word, we do not as we would be done by.

2. As to his general character before this affliction, he chargeth him with wickedness and false-heartedness, and that article of his charge was utterly groundless, and unjust. How unkindly doth he banter him, and upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if it were all now come to nothing, and proved a sham, ver. 6. *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?* Doth it not all appear now to be a meer pretence? For hadst thou been sincere in it, God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldst thou have carried thy self thus under the affliction. This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job an hypocrite, and disprove the character God had given of him: when he could not himself do this to God, but he still saw and said, *Job is perfect and upright,* then he endeavoured by his friends to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself an hypocrite: could he have gained that point, he would have triumphed, *habes confitentem reum:* but by the grace of God Job was enabled to hold his own, and would not bear false witness against himself. Note, Those that pass rash and uncharitable censures upon their brethren, and condemn them for hypocrites, do Satan's work, and serve his interest more than they are aware of. I know not how it comes to pass that this verse is differently read in several editions of our common English Bibles; the original, and all the antient versions, put *thy hope* before *the uprightness of thy ways.* So doth the Geneva, and most of the editions of the last translation; but I find one of the first in 1612, has it, *is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways and thy hope?* Both the Assemblies annotations, and Mr Pool's, have that reading: and an edition in 1660, reads it, *is not thy fear thy confidence: and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope?* Doth it not appear now that all the religion, both of thy devotion, and of thy conversation, was only in hope and confidence that thou shouldst grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary! The very thing that Satan suggested. *Is not thy religion thy hope, and thy right ways thy confidence?* So Mr Broughton. Or, was it not? Didst thou not think that would have been thy protection; but thou art deceived? Or, would it not have been so? If it had been sincere, would it not have kept thee from this despair? It is true, *if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength, thy grace, is small,* Prov. xxiv. 10. But it doth not therefore follow thou hast no grace, no strength at all. A man's character is not to be taken from a single act.

7. Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? 8. Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. 9. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. 10. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken. 11. The old lion perish-

eth for lack of prey, and the stout lions whelps are scattered abroad.

Eliphaz here advanceth another argument to prove Job an hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him, but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great and extraordinary, and there being no prospect at all of his deliverance out of them.

To strengthen this argument he here lays down these two principles, which seem plausible enough.

1. That good men were never thus ruined: and for the proof of this he appeals to Job's own observation, ver. 7. *Remember, I pray thee;* recollect all that thou hast seen, heard, or read, and give me an instance of any one that was innocent and righteous, and yet perished as thou dost, and was cut off as thou art. If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true, none that are innocent and righteous perish for ever: it is only a man of sin that is a *son of perdition*, 2 Thes. ii. 3. But then it is ill applied to Job, he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off: a man is never undone till he is in hell. But if we understand it of any temporal calamity his principle is not true. *The righteous perish,* Isa. lvii. 1. *There is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked,* (Eccl. ix. 2.) both in life and death, the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time, (as early as it was) there were instances sufficient to contradict this principle. Did not righteous Abel perish being innocent, and was not he cut off in the beginning of his days? Was not righteous Lot burnt out of house and harbour, and forced to retire to a melancholy cave? Was not righteous Jacob, a Syrian, ready to perish, Deut. xxvi. 5. And other such instances no doubt there were, which are not on record.

2. That wicked men were often thus ruined; and for the proof of this he voucheth his own observation, ver. 8. Even as I have seen, many a time, *they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, by the blast of God they perish,* ver. 9. We have daily instances of that; and therefore since thou dost thus perish and art consumed, we have reason to think that whatever profession of religion thou hast made, thou hast but plowed iniquity, and sown wickedness. Even as I have seen in others, so do I see in thee.

1. He speaks of sinners in general, politick, busy sinners, that take pains in sin, for they plow iniquity, and expect gain by sin, for they sow wickedness: they that plow, plow in hope, but what is the issue? *they reap the same:* they shall of the flesh reap corruption and ruin, Gal. vi. 7, 8. The harvest will be a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11. He shall reap the same, *i. e.* the proper product of that seedness; that which the sinner sows, he sows not that body that shall be, but God will give it a body, a body of death, *the end of those things,* Rom. vi. 21. Some by iniquity and wickedness understand wrong and injury done to others; they who plow and sow that shall reap the same, *i. e.* they shall be paid in their own coin. They that are troublesome shall be troubled, 2 Thes. i. 6. *Josh. vii. 25.* The spoilers spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1. and that led captive shall go captive, Rev. xiii. 10.

He further describes their destruction, ver. 9. *By the blast of God they perish.* The projects they take so much pains in are defeated, God cuts in sunder the cords of these plowers, Psal. cxxix. 3, 4. They themselves are destroyed, which is the just punishment of their iniquity. They perish, *i. e.* they are destroyed utterly, they are consumed, *i. e.* they are destroyed gradually; and this by the blast and breath of God, *i. e.* (1.) By his wrath; his anger is the ruin of sinners, who are therefore called vessels of wrath, and his breath is said to kindle tophet, Isa. xxx. 33. *who knows the power of his anger?* Psal. xc. 8. (2.) By his word: He speaks and it is done; easily, and effectually. The Spirit of God in the word consumes sinners, with that he slays them, Hos. vi. 5. saying and doing are not two things with God. The man of sin is said to be consumed with the *breath of Christ's mouth*, 2 Thes. ii. 8. compare Isa. xi. 4. Rev. xix. 21. Some think in attributing the destruction of sinners to the blast of God, and the breath of his nostrils, he refers to the wind which blew the house down upon Job's children, as if they were therefore sinners above all men, because they suffered such things. Luk. xiii. 2.

2. He speaks particularly of tyrants, and cruel oppressors, under the similitude of lions. ver. 10, 11. Observe, 1. How he describes their cruelty and oppression: the Hebrew tongue has five several names for lions, and they are all here used to set forth the terrible tearing power, fierceness, and cruelty, of proud oppressors; they roar, and rend, and prey upon all about them, and bring up their young ones to do so too, Ezek. xix. 3. The devil is a roaring lion, and they partake of his nature, and do his lusts. They are strong as lions, and subtle, Psal. x. 9.—xvii. 12. and as far as they prevail, lay all desolate about them.

2. How he describes their destruction; the destruction both of their power, and of their persons: they shall be restrained from doing further hurt, and reckoned with for the hurt they have done. An effectual course shall be taken, (1.) That they shall not terrify; the voice of their roaring shall be stopped. (2.) That they shall not tear; God will disarm them, will take away their



their power to do hurt, *the teeth of the young lions are broken*, Psal. iii. 7. Thus shall the remainder of wrath be restrained. (3.) That they shall not enrich themselves with the spoil of their neighbours. Even the old lion is famished, and perisheth for lack of prey: they that have surfeited on spoil and rapine are perhaps reduced to such straits as to die for hunger at last. (4.) That they shall not, as they promised themselves, leave a succession, the *stout lions whelps are scattered abroad*, to seek for food themselves, which the old ones used to bring in for them, *Nab. ii. 12. The lion did tear in pieces for his whelps*, but now they must shift for themselves. Perhaps Eliphaz intended in this to reflect upon Job, as if he being the *greatest of all the men of the east*, had got his estate by spoil, and used his power in oppressing his neighbours, but now his power and estate were gone, and his family scattered: if so, it was pity a man whom God praised should be thus abused.

12. Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. 13. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, 14. Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. 15. Then a spirit passed before my face, the hair of my flesh stood up. 16. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image *was* before mine eyes, *there was* silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*, 17. Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? 18. Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: 19. How much less on them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, *which* are crushed before the moth? 20. They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it. 21. Doth not their excellency *which* is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.

Eliphaz having undertaken to convince Job of the sin and folly of his discontent and impatience, here vouches a vision he had been favoured with, which he relates to Job for his conviction. What comes immediately from God all men will pay a particular deference to, and Job, no doubt, as much as any. Some think Eliphaz had this vision now lately, since he came to Job, putting words into his mouth wherewith to reason with him, and it had been well if he had kept to the purport of this vision, which would serve for a ground on which to reprove Job for his murmuring, but not to condemn him for an hypocrite. Others think he had it formerly, for God did in this way often communicate himself to the children of men in those first ages of the world, *Job xxxiii. 15.* Probably, God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other, when he was himself in an unquiet discontented frame, to calm and pacify him. Note, As we should comfort others with that wherewith we have been comforted, (*2 Cor. i. 4.*) so we should endeavour to convince others with that which has been powerful to convince us.

The people of God had not then any written word to quote, and therefore God sometimes notified to them even common truths, by the extraordinary ways of revelation. We that have bibles have there (thanks be to God) a more sure word to depend upon than even visions and voices, *2 Pet. i. 19.* Observe,

1. The manner how this message was sent to Eliphaz, and the circumstances of the conveyance of it to him. (1.) It was brought him secretly, or by stealth: some of the sweetest communion gracious souls have with God is in secret, where no eye sees but his that is all-eye. God has ways of bringing conviction, counsel, and comfort, to his people unobserved by the world, by private whispers, as powerfully and effectually as by the public ministry. *His secret is with them*, Psal. xxv. 14. As the evil spirit often steals good words out of the heart, *Mat. xiii. 19.* so the good Spirit sometimes steals good words into the heart, or ever we are aware. (2.) *He received a little thereof.* ver. 12. And it is but little of divine knowledge that the best receive in this world: we know little in comparison with what is to be known, and with what we shall know when we come to heaven. *How little a portion is heard of God!* Job xxvi. 14. *We know but in part*, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* See his humility and modesty. He pretends not to have understood it fully, but something of it he perceived. (3.) It was brought him in the visions of the night, ver. 13. When he was retired from the world, and the hurry of it, and all about him was composed and quiet. Note, The more we are withdrawn from the world, and the things of it, the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are *communing with our own hearts, and are still*, (Psal. iv. 4.) then is a proper time for the holy Spirit to commune with us. When others were asleep, Eliphaz was ready to receive this visit from heaven, and probably, like David, was *meditating upon God in the night-watches*: in the midst of those good thoughts this thing was brought to him. We should hear more from God if we thought more of him; yet some are surprized with convictions in the night. *Job xxxiii. 14, 15.* (4.) It was prefaced with terrors, *fear came*

upon him, and trembling. ver. 14. It should seem, before he either heard or saw any thing, he was seized with this trembling, which shook his bones, and perhaps the bed under him. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty being struck upon his spirit, he was thereby prepared for a divine visit. Whom God intends to honour, he first humbles and lays low, and will have us all to serve him with holy fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

2. The messenger by whom it was sent, a spirit, one of the good angels, who are employed not only as the ministers of God's providence, but sometimes as the ministers of his word. Concerning this apparition which Eliphaz saw we are here told, ver. 15, 16. (1.) That it was real, and not a dream, not a fancy; an image was before his eyes, he plainly saw it, at first it passed and repassed before his face, moved up and down, but at length it stood still, to speak to him. If some have been so knavish as to impose false visions on others, and some so foolish as to be themselves imposed upon, it doth not therefore follow but that there have been apparitions of spirits, both good and bad. (2.) That it was indistinct, and somewhat confused. He could not discern the form thereof, so as to frame any exact idea of it in his own mind, much less to give a description of it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, not his curiosity gratified. We know little of spirits, we are not capable of knowing much of them, nor is it fit we should, all in good time, we must shortly remove to the world of spirits, and shall then be better acquainted with them. (3.) That it put him into a mighty consternation, so that his hair stood an end. Ever since man sinned, it has been terrible to him to receive an express from heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence; apparitions therefore, even of good spirits, have always made deep impressions of fear, even upon good men. How well is it for us that God sends us his messages not by spirits, but by men like our selves, whose terror shall not make us afraid! See *Dan. vii. 28.*—x. 8, 9.

3. The message it self: before it was delivered there was silence, profound silence, ver. 16. When we are to speak either from God, or to him, it becomes us to address our selves to it with a solemn pause, and so to set bounds about the mount on which God is to come down, and not be hasty to utter any thing. It was in a still small voice that the message was delivered, and this was it, ver. 17. *Shall mortal man be more just than God, the immortal God? shall a man be thought to be, or pretend to be, more pure than his Maker?* away with such a thought! (1.) Some think Eliphaz aims hereby to prove that Job's great afflictions were a certain evidence of his being a wicked man: a mortal man would be thought unjust and very impure, if he should thus correct and punish a servant, or subject, unless he had been guilty of some very great crime; if therefore these were not some great crimes for which God thus punisheth thee, man would be more just than God, which is not to be imagined. (2.) I rather think it is only a reproof of Job's murmuring and discontent; shall a man pretend to be more just and pure than God? more truly to understand, and more strictly to observe the rules and laws of equity than God? shall Enosh, mortal, miserable man be so insolent; nay, shall Geber, the strongest and most eminent man, man at his best estate, pretend to compare with God, or stand in competition with him! Note, It is most impious and absurd to think either others or our selves more just and pure than God. Those that quarrel and find fault with the directions of the divine law, the dispensations of the divine grace, or the disposals of the divine providence, make themselves more just and pure than God, and they who thus *reprove God, let them answer it.* What? sinful man, (for he had not been mortal, if he had not been sinful) short-sighted man, shall he pretend to be more just, more pure, than God, who, being his maker, is his lord and owner? shall the clay contend with the potter? What justice and purity there is in man, God is the author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure. See *Psal. xciv. 9, 10.*

4. The comment which Eliphaz makes upon this, for so it seems to be; yet some take all the following verses to be spoken in vision. It comes all to one.

1. He shews how little the angels themselves are, in comparison with God, ver. 18. Angels are God's servants, waiting servants, working servants, they are his ministers, *Psal. civ. 4.* bright and blessed beings they are, but God neither needs them, nor is benefited by them, and is himself infinitely above them; and therefore (1.) He put no trust in them, did not repose a confidence in them as we do in those we cannot live without; there is no service in which he employs them, but if he pleased he could have it done as well without them. He never made them his confidants, or of his cabinet-council, *Mat. xxiv. 36.* He doth not leave his business wholly to them, but *his own eyes run to and fro through the earth*, *2 Chron. xvi. 9.* See this phrase, *Job xxxix. 11.* Some give this sense of it, so mutable is even the angelical nature, that God would not trust them with their own integrity; if he had, they would all have done, as some did, left their first estate, but he saw it necessary to give them a supernatural grace to confirm them. (2.) He chargeth them with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with God. If the world were left to the government of the angels, and they were trusted with the sole management of affairs, they would



would take false steps, and every thing would not be done for the best, as now it is. Angels are intelligences, but finite ones. Tho' not chargeable with iniquity, yet with imprudence. This last clause is variously rendered by the critics. I think it would bear this reading, repeating the negation, which is very common. He will put no trusts in his saints, *nor will he glory in his angels, or make his boast of them*, as if their praises, or services, added any thing to him: it is his glory that he is infinitely happy without them. *In angelis suis non ponet gloriationem.*

2. Thence he infers how much less man is, how much less to be trusted in; or gloried in: if there be such a distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is represented here in his meanness.

1. Look upon man *in his life*, and he is *very mean*, ver. 19. Take man in his best estate, and he is a very despicable creature, in comparison with the holy angels, tho' honourable if compared with the brutes. It is true, angels are spirits, and the souls of men are spirits; but (1.) Angels are pure spirits, the souls of men dwell in houses of clay; such the bodies of men are. Angels are free, human souls are housed, and the body is a cloud, a clog to it, it is its cage, it is its prison. It is a house of clay, mean, and mouldring; an earthen vessel, soon broken, as it was first formed according to the good pleasure of the potter. It is a cottage, not a house of cedar, or a house of ivory, but of clay, which would soon be in ruins if not kept in constant repair. (2.) Angels are fixed, but the very foundation of that house of clay in which man dwells is in the dust. A house of clay, if built upon a rock, might stand long; but if founded in the dust, the uncertainty of the foundation will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. As man was made out of the earth, so he is maintained and supported by that which comes out of the earth. Take away that, and his body returns to its earth. We stand but upon the dust, some have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others; but still it is the earth that stays us up, and will shortly swallow us up. (3.) Angels are immortal, but man is soon crushed, the earthly house of his tabernacle dissolved, he dies and wastes away, is crushed like a moth between one's fingers, as easily, as quickly: one may almost as soon kill a man as kill a moth. A little thing will do it, he is *crushed before the face of the moth*, so the word is. If some lingering distemper which consumes like a moth be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than he can resist an acute distemper, that comes roaring upon him like a lion. See *Hos. v. 12, 14*. Is such a creature as this to be trusted in, or can any service be expected from him, by that God who puts no trust in angels themselves?

2. Look upon him in his death, and he appears yet more despicable and unfit to be trusted. Men are mortal, and dying, ver. 20, 21. (1.) In death they are destroyed, and perish for ever, as to this world; it is the final period of their lives, and all their employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more. (2.) They are dying daily, and continually wasting; *destroyed from morning to evening*, death is still working in us, *like a mole digging our grave at each remove*, and we so continually lie exposed, that we are killed all the day long. (3.) Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off, it lasts perhaps but from morning to evening. It is but a day, (so some understand it) their birth and death are but the sun-rise and sun-set of the same day. (4.) In death all their excellency passeth away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death, but dies with them, nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power, descend after them. (5.) Their wisdom cannot save them from death, they die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth. (6.) It is so common a thing that no body heeds it, or takes any notice of it; they perish *without any regarding it*, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought.

Some think the eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of as well as their temporal death. *They are destroyed, or broken to pieces by death from morning to evening; and if they repent not they perish for ever*, so some read it, ver. 20. they perish for ever because they regard not God and their duty, they *consider not their latter end*, Lam. i. 9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away, and they die, they die the second death for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying creature as this pretend to be *more just than God, and more pure than his maker*? No, instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him admire he is out of Hell.

## CHAP. V.

Eliphaz in the foregoing chapter for the making good of his charge against Job, had vouched a word from heaven, sent him in a vision. In this chapter he appeals to those that bear record on earth, to the saints, the faithful witnesses of God's truths, in all ages, ver. 1. *they will testify* (1.) *That the sin of sinners is their ruin*, ver. 2—5. (2.) *That yet affliction is the common lot of mankind*, ver. 6, 7. (3.) *That when we are in affliction, it is our wisdom and duty to apply our selves to God, for he is*

*able and ready to help us*, ver. 8—16. (4.) *That the afflictions which are born well will end well; and Job particularly, if he would come to a better temper, might assure himself that God had great mercy in store for him*, ver. 17—27. So that he concludes his discourse in somewhat a better humour than he began it.

1. **C**ALL now, if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?
2. For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one. 3. I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation. 4. His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them. 5. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.

A very warm dispute being begun between Job and his friends, Eliphaz here makes a fair motion to put the matter to a reference; and in all debates perhaps the sooner that is done the better, if the contenders cannot end it between themselves: And so well assured is Eliphaz of the goodness of his own cause, that he moves Job himself to chuse the arbitrators, ver. 1. *Call now, if there be any that will answer thee, i. e.* (1.) If there be any that suffer as thou sufferest: canst thou produce an instance of any one that was really a saint, that was reduced to such extremity as thou art now reduced to? God never dealt with any that love his name so as he deals with thee, and therefore sure thou art none of them. (2.) If there be any that say as thou sayest: did ever any good man curse his day as thou dost? Or, will any of the saints justify thee in these heats, or passions, or say, that these are the spots of God's children? thou wilt find none of the saints that will be either thine advocates, or mine antagonists. *To which of the saints wilt thou turn?* Turn to which thou wilt, and thou wilt find they are all of my mind, I have the *communis sensus fidelium*, the unanimous vote of all the saints, on my side, they will all subscribe to what I am going to say. See *Job xxxiv. 8*.

Observe (1.) Good people are called saints, even in the old testament; and therefore I know not why we should in common speaking (unless because we must *loqui cum vulgo*) appropriate the title to those of the New Testament, and not say St Abraham, and St. Moses, and St Isaiah, as well as St Matthew, and St Mark; and St David the psalmist, as well as St David the British bishop. Aaron is expressly called *the saint of the Lord*. (2.) All that are themselves saints, will turn to those that are so, will chuse them for their friends and converse with them; will chuse them for their judges, and consult with them. See *Psal. cxix. 79*. *The saints shall judge the world*, 1 Cor. vi. 1, 2. *Walk in the way of good men*, Prov. ii. 20. *the old way, the footsteps of the flock*. Every one chuseth some sort of people or other to whom he studies to recommend himself, and by whose sentiments he reckons honour and dishonour: now all true saints endeavour to recommend themselves to those that are so, and to stand right in their opinion. (3.) There are some truths so plain, and so universally known and believed, that one may venture to appeal to any of the saints concerning them. However there are some things about which they unhappily differ, there are many more, and more considerable, in which they are agreed. As the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the worth of the soul, the necessity of a holy life, and the like. Tho' they do not all live up as they should to their belief of these truths, yet they are all ready to bear their testimony to them.

Now there are two things which Eliphaz here maintains, and doubts not but all the saints concur with him.

1. That the sin of sinners directly tends to their own ruin, ver. 2.
2. *Wrath kills the foolish man*, his own wrath doth it, and therefore he is foolish for indulging it; it is a fire in his bones, in his blood, enough to have put him into a fever; and envy is the rottenness of the bones, and so slays the silly one, that frets himself with it. So it is with thee, saith Eliphaz, while thou quarrellest with God, thou dost thy self the greatest mischief; thine anger at thine own troubles, and thine envy at our prosperity, doth but add to thy pain and misery: Turn to the saints, and thou wilt find they understand themselves better. Job had told his wife she spake as the foolish women, now Eliphaz tells him he acted as the foolish men, the silly ones. Or it may be meant thus: If men are ruined and undone, it is always their own folly that ruins and undoes them. They kill themselves by some lust or other, therefore no doubt (Job) thou hast done some foolish thing, by which thou hast brought thy self into this calamitous condition. Many understand it of God's wrath and jealousy. Job needed not be uneasy at the prosperity of the wicked, for the world's smiles can never shelter them from God's frowns; they are foolish and silly, if they think they will. God's anger and indignation will be the death, the eternal death, of those on whom it fastens: What is hell but that without mixture or period?

2. That their prosperity is short, and their destruction certain, ver. 3, 4, 5. He seems here to parallel Job's case with that which is commonly the case of wicked people.



1. Job had prospered for a time, seemed confirmed, and was secure in his prosperity, and it is common for foolish wicked men to do so: *I have seen them taking root*, planted, and in their own and others apprehension fixed, and likely to continue. See *Jer. xii. 2. Psal. xxxvii. 35, 36.* We see worldly men taking root in the earth, on earthly things they fix the standing of their hopes, and from them they draw the sap of their comforts: The outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth.

2. Job's prosperity was now at an end, and so has the prosperity of other wicked people quickly been.

1. Eliphaz foresaw their ruin with an eye of faith. They who looked only at present things, blessed their habitation, and thought them happy, blessed it long, and wished themselves in their condition: But Eliphaz cursed it, suddenly cursed it, as soon as he saw them begin to take root, *i. e.* he plainly foresaw and foretold their ruin; not that he prayed for it, *I have not desired the woful day*, but he prognosticated it: He *went into the sanctuary*, and there *understood their end*, and heard their doom read, *Psal. lxxiii. 17, 18.* That the *prosperity of fools will destroy them*, *Prov. i. 32.* They who believe the word of God can see a *curse in the house of the wicked*, *Prov. iii. 33.* tho' it be never so finely and firmly built, and never so full of all good things, and can foresee that it will in time infallibly consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, *Zech. v. 4.*

2. He saw at length what he had foreseen; he was not disappointed in his expectation concerning him, the event answered it; his family was undone, and his estate ruined. In which particulars he plainly and very invidiously reflects on Job's calamities. (1.) His children were crushed, *ver. 4.* They thought themselves safe in their eldest brother's house, but were far from safety, for they were crushed in the gate; perhaps the door or gate of the house was highest built, and fell heaviest upon them, and there was none to deliver them from perishing in the ruins. This is commonly understood of the destruction of the families of wicked men, by the execution of justice upon them, to oblige them to restore what they have ill got. They leave it to their children, but the descent shall not bar the entry of the rightful owners, who will crush their children, and cast them by due course of law, and there shall be none to help them: Or perhaps by oppression, *Psal. cix. 9, &c.* (2.) His estate was plundered, *ver. 5.* Job's was so; the hungry robbers, the Sabeans and Chaldeans run away with it, and swallowed it, and this, saith he, I have often observed in others. What has been got by spoil and rapine, has been lost the same way. The careful owner hedged it about with thorns, and then thought it safe, but the fence proved insignificant against the greediness of the spoilers; if hunger will break thro' stone-walls, much more thro' thorn-hedges, and against the divine curse, which will go thro' the thorns and briars, and *burn them together*, *Isa. xxvii. 4.*

6. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground: 7. Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. 8. I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: 9. Which doeth great things, and unsearchable; marvellous things without number. 10. Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: 11. To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. 12. He disappointed the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. 13. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. 14. They met with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night. 15. But he saved the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. 16. So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

Eliphaz having touched Job in a very tender part, in mentioning both the loss of his estate, and the death of his children, as the just punishment of his sin, that he might not drive him to despair, here begins to encourage him, and puts him in a way to make himself easy. Now he doth very much change his voice, (allude to *Gal. iv. 20.*) and speaks Job fair, as if he would atone for the hard words he had given him.

1. He minds him, that no affliction comes by chance, nor is to be attributed to second causes. It *doth not come forth of the dust*, nor *spring out of the ground*, as the grass doth, *ver. 6.* It doth not come of course at certain seasons of the year, as natural productions do, by a chain of second causes. The proportion between prosperity and adversity is not so exactly observed by providence, as that between day and night, summer and winter, but according to the will and counsel of God, when and as he thinks fit. Some read it, *Sin comes not forth of the dust, nor iniquity out of the ground.* If men be bad, they must not lay the blame upon the soil, the climate, or the stars, but on themselves. *If thou scornest, thou*

*alone shalt bear it.* We must not attribute our afflictions to fortune, for they are from God, nor our sins to fate, for they are from our selves; so that whatever trouble we are in, we must own that God sends it upon us, and we procure it to our selves: The former is a reason why we should be very patient; the latter why we should be very penitent, when we are afflicted.

2. He minds him, that trouble and affliction is what we have all reason to expect in this world. *Man is born to trouble*, *ver. 7.* not as man, had he kept his innocency he had been born to pleasure; but as sinful man; as *born of a woman*, *Job xiv. 1.* who was in the transgression: Man is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. Even those that are born to honour and estate, yet are born to trouble in the flesh. In our fallen state, it is become natural to us to sin, and the natural consequence of that is affliction, *Rom. v. 12.* There is nothing in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upward. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption; and being called *transgressors from the womb*, no wonder that we *deal very treacherously*, *Isa. xlviii. 8.* And such is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles also thence arise as naturally as the sparks fly upward; so many are they, so thick and so fast doth one follow another: Why then should we be surprized at our afflictions as strange, or quarrel with them as hard, when they are but what we are born to? Man is born to labour, so it is in the margin, is sentenced to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, which should enure him to hardness, and make him bear his afflictions the better.

3. He directs him how to behave himself under his affliction, *ver. 8.* *I would seek unto God*; surely I would: So it is in the original. Here is (1.) A tacit reproof to Job for not seeking to God, but quarrelling with him; Job, if I had been in thy case, I would not have been so peevish and passionate as thou art, I would have acquiesced in the will of God. It is easy to say what we would do if we were in such a one's case, but when it comes to the trial, perhaps it will be found not so easy to do as we say. (2.) Very good and seasonable advice to him, which Eliphaz transfers to himself in a figure: For my part, the best way I should think I could take, if I were in thy condition, would be to apply my self to God. Note, We should give our friends no other counsel but what we would take our selves, if we were in their case, that we may be easy under our afflictions, may get good by them, and may see a good issue of them. (1.) We must by prayer fetch in mercy and grace from God: Seek to him as a father and friend, tho' he contend with us, as one who is alone able to support and succour us: His favour we must seek, when we have lost all we have in the world; to him we must address our selves, as the fountain and father of all good, all consolation. *Is any afflicted? let him pray.* It is heart's ease, a salve for every sore. (2.) We must by patience refer our selves and our cause to him. *To God would I commit my cause*, having spread it before him, I would leave it with him; having laid it at his feet, I would lodge it in his hand; *Here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good.* If our cause be indeed a good cause, we need not fear committing it to God, for he is both just and kind. They that would seek so as to speed, must refer themselves to God.

4. He encourageth him thus to seek to God, and commit his cause to him: It will not be in vain to do so, for he is one in whom we shall find effectual help. Two things in God he recommends to his consideration.

1. God's almighty power and sovereign dominion. In general, he *doth great things*, *ver. 9.* great indeed, for he can do any thing, he doth do every thing; and all according to the counsel of his own will. Great indeed, for the operations of his power are (1.) Unsearchable, and such as can never be fathomed, can never be found out *from the beginning to the end*, *Eccl. iii. 11.* The works of nature are mysteries, the most curious searches come far short of full discoveries, and the wisest philosophers have owned themselves at a loss: The designs of providence are much more deep and unaccountable, *Rom. xi. 33.* (2.) Numerous, and such as can never be reckoned up; He doth great things without number; his power is never exhausted, nor will all his purposes ever be fulfilled till the end of time. (3.) They are marvellous, and such as can never be sufficiently admired, eternity it self will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. Now by the consideration of this, Eliphaz intends (1.) To convince Job of his fault and folly in quarrelling with God: We must not pretend to pass a judgment upon his works, for they are unsearchable, and above our enquiries; nor must we strive with our Maker, for he will certainly be too hard for us, and is able to crush us in a moment. (2.) To encourage Job to seek unto God, and to refer himself to him: What more encouraging than to see that he is one to whom power belongs? He can do great things and marvellous for our relief, when we are brought never so low.

He gives some instances of God's dominion and power.

1. God doth great things in the kingdom of nature; he *gives rain upon the earth*, *ver. 10.* put here for all the gifts of common providence, all the *fruitful seasons* by which he *filleth our hearts with food and gladness*, *Acts xiv. 17.* Observe, When he would shew what great things God doth, he speaks of his giving rain, which, because it is a common thing, we are apt to look upon



upon as a little thing, but if we duly consider both how it is produced, and what is produced by it, we shall see it to be a great work, both of power and goodness.

2. He doth great things in the affairs of the children of men. Not only enricheth the poor, and comforts the needy, by the rain he sends, *ver. 10.* but, in order to the advancing of those that be low, he *disappoints the devices of the crafty*, for *ver. 11.* is to be joined to *ver. 12.* and compared with *Luke i. 51, 52, 53.* He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and so hath exalted them of low degree, and filled the hungry with good things.

See, 1. How he frustrates the counsels of the proud and politick, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* There is a supreme power that manageth and over-ruleth men that think themselves free and absolute, and fulfils its own purposes, in despite of their projects. Observe (1.) The froward that walk contrary to God, and the interests of his kingdom, are often very crafty, for they are the seed of the old serpent, that was noted for his subtilty: They think themselves wise, but at their end will be fools. (2.) The froward enemies of God's kingdom have their devices, their enterprizes, and their counsels against it, and against the loyal faithful subjects of it. They are restless and unwearied in their designs, close in their consultations, high in their hopes, deep in their politicks, and fast linked in their confederacies, *Psal. ii. 1, 2.* (3.) God easily can, and (as far as is for his glory) certainly will blast and defeat all the designs of his and his peoples enemies. How were the plots of Achitophel, Sanballat, and Haman, baffled! The confederates of Syria and Ephraim against Judah, of Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, against God's Israel, the kings of the earth, and the princes against the Lord, and against his anointed, broken! The hands that have been stretched out against God and his church, have not performed their enterprize; nor have the weapons formed against Zion prospered. (4.) That which enemies have designed for the ruin of the church, has often turned to their own ruin, *ver. 13.* He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and snares them in the work of their own hands, *Psal. vii. 15, 16.—ix. 15, 16.* This is quoted by the apostle, *1 Cor. iii. 19.* to shew how the learned men of the heathen were befooled by their own vain philosophy. (5.) When God insatuates men they are perplexed, and at a loss, even in those things that seem most plain and easy, *ver. 14.* They meet with darkness even in the day-time: Nay, as it is in the margin, they run themselves into darkness, by the violence and precipitation of their own counsels. See *chap. xii. 20, 24, 25.*

2. How he favours the cause of the poor and humble, and espouseth that.

1. He exalteth the humble, *ver. 11.* Those whom proud men contrive to crush, he raiseth from under their feet, and sets them in safety, *Psal. xii. 5.* The lowly in heart, and those that mourn, he advanceth, he comforteth, and makes them to dwell on high, in the munitions of rocks, *Isa. xxxiii. 16.* Sion's mourners are the sealed ones, marked for safety, *Ezek. ix. 4.*

2. He delivereth the oppressed, *ver. 15.* The designs of the crafty were to ruin the poor: Tongue, and hand, and sword, and all are at work, in order to this, but God takes them under his special protection, who being poor, and unable to help themselves, being his poor, and devoted to his praise, have committed themselves to him. He saves them from the mouth that speaks hard things against them, and the hand that doth hard things against them, for he can when he pleases tie the tongue, and wither the hand.

And the effect of this is, *ver. 16.* (1.) That weak and timorous saints are comforted: *so the poor has hope*, that began to despair: The experiences of some are encouragements to others, to hope the best in the worst of times, for it is the glory of God to send help to the helpless, and hope to the hopeless. (2.) That daring threatening sinners are confounded; iniquity stops her mouth, being surprized at the strangeness of the deliverance, ashamed of its enmity against those who appear to be the favourites of heaven, mortified at the disappointment, and compelled to acknowledge the justice of God's proceedings, having nothing to object against them. Those that hectored God's poor, that frightened them, menaced them, and falsely accused them, will have not a word to say against them, when God appears for them. See *Psal. lxxvi. 8, 9. Isa. xxvi. 11. Mic. vii. 16.*

17. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastning of the Almighty: 18. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. 19. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. 20. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war, from the power of the sword. 21. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. 22. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. 23. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.

No. xxxv.

24. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shall not sin. 25. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. 26. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season. 27. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.

Eliphaz in this concluding paragraph of his discourse, gives Job (what he himself knew not how to take) a comfortable prospect of the issue of his afflictions, if he did but recover his temper, and accommodate himself to them.

Observe, 1. The seasonable word of caution and exhortation that he gives him, *ver. 17.* *Despise not thou the chastning of the Almighty.* Call it a chastning which comes from the father's love, and is designed for the child's good: Call it the chastning of the Almighty, with whom it is madness to contend, to whom it is wisdom and duty to submit, and who will be a God all-sufficient (for so the word signifies) to all those that trust in him. Do not despise it; it is a copious word in the original. (1.) Be not averse to it: Let grace conquer the antipathy which nature has to suffering, and reconcile thy self to the will of God in it: We need the rod, and we deserve it, and therefore we ought not to think it either strange or hard if we feel the smart of it. Let not the heart rise against a bitter pill or potion, when it is prescribed us for our good. (2.) Do not think ill of it, do not put it from you, as that which is either hurtful, or at least not useful; which there is no occasion for, nor advantage by, only because for the present it is not joyous but grievous. We must never scorn to stoop to God, nor think it a thing below us to come under his discipline, but reckon, on the contrary, that God really magnifies man, when he thus visits and tries him, *Job vii. 17, 18.* (3.) Do not overlook and disregard it, as if it were only a chance, and the product of second causes, but take great notice of it as the voice of God, and a messenger from heaven. More is implied than is expressed: *Reverence the chastening of the Lord*; have an humble awful regard to his correcting hand, and tremble when the lion roars, *Amos iii. 8.* Submit to the chastning, and study to answer the calls, to answer the end of it, and then you reverence it. When God by an affliction draws upon us for some of the effects he has intrusted us with, we must honour his will, by accepting it, and subscribing it, resigning him his own when he calls for it.

2. The comfortable words of encouragement which he gives him, thus to accommodate himself to his condition, and (as he himself had expressed it) to receive evil from the hand of God, and not despise it as a gift not worth the accepting. If his affliction was thus born,

1. The nature and property of it would be altered: Tho' it looked like a man's misery, it would really be his bliss, *Happy is the man whom God correcteth*, if he make but a due improvement of the correction. A good man is happy tho' he be afflicted, for whatever he has lost he has not lost his enjoyment of God, nor his title to heaven; nay, he is happy because he is afflicted; correction is an evidence of his sonship, and a means of his sanctification; it mortifies his corruptions, weans his heart from the world, draws him nearer to God, brings him to his bible, brings him to his knees, works him for, and so is working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, *Happy therefore is the man whom God correcteth*, *Jam. i. 12.*

2. The issue and consequent of it would be very good, *ver. 18.* (1.) Tho' he maketh sore the body with sore boils, the mind with sad thoughts, yet he bindeth up at the same time; as the skilful tender surgeon binds up the wounds he had occasion to make with his incision-knife. When God makes sore by the rebukes of his providence, he binds up by the consolations of his Spirit, which oftentimes abound most as afflictions do abound, and balance them to the unspeakable satisfaction of the patient sufferers. (2.) Tho' he wounds, yet his hands make whole in due time; as he supports his people, and makes them easy under their afflictions, so in due time he delivers them, and makes a way for them to escape. All is well again; and he comforts them according to the time wherein he afflicted them. God's usual method is first to wound and then to heal, first to convince and then to comfort, first to humble, and then to exalt, and (as Mr Caryl observes) he never makes a wound too great, too deep for his own cure. *Una eademque manus vulnus apemque tulit.* God tears the wicked, and goes away, let them heal that will, if they can, *Hos. v. 14.* but the humble and penitent may say, *He has torn and he will heal us*, *Hos. vi. 1.*

This is general, but in the following verses he applies himself directly to Job, and gives him many precious promises of great and kind things which God would do for him, if he did but humble himself under his hand. Tho' then they had no bibles that we know of, yet Eliphaz had sufficient warrant to give Job these assurances, from the general discoveries God had made of his good will to his people. And tho' in every thing which Job's friends said, they were not directed by the Spirit of God, for they spake both of God and Job some things that were not right, yet the general



neral doctrines they laid down, spake the pious sense of the patriarchal age, and as St Paul quoted, *ver. 13.* for canonical scripture, and the command, *ver. 17.* is no doubt binding to us, so these promises here may be, and must be, received and applied as divine promises, and we may, *through patience and comfort of this part of scripture, have hope.*

Let us therefore give diligence to make sure our interest in these promises, and then view the particulars of them, and take the comfort of them.

1. It is here promised, *that as afflictions and troubles do recur, supports and deliverances shall be graciously repeated,* be it never so often. *In six troubles he shall be ready to deliver thee; yea, and in seven.* This intimates, that as long as we are here in this world, we must expect a succession of troubles, that the clouds will return after the rain; after six troubles may come a seventh. After many look for more, but *out of them all* will God deliver those that are his, *2 Tim. iii. 11.* *Psal. xxxiv. 19.* Former deliverances are earnest of, not, as among men, excuses from further deliverances, *Prov. xix. 19.*

2. That whatever troubles good men may be in, there shall no evil touch them, they shall do them no real harm; the malignity of them shall be taken out, they shall be unstung, they may hiss, they cannot hurt, *Psal. xci. 10.* The evil one toucheth not God's children, *1 Joh. v. 18.* Being kept from sin, they are kept from the evil of every trouble.

3. That when desolating judgments are abroad, they shall be taken under special protection, *ver. 20.* Do many perish about them for want of the necessary supports of life, they shall be supplied; *In famine he shall redeem thee from death,* whatever becomes of others thou shalt be kept alive, *Psal. xxxiii. 19.* *Verily thou shalt be fed,* nay, even in the days of famine thou shalt be satisfied, *Psal. xxxvii. 3, 19.* In time of war, when thousands fall on thy right and left hand, he shall redeem thee from the power of the sword: If God please it shall not touch thee, or if it wound thee, if it kill thee, it shall not hurt thee; it can but kill the body, nor has it power to do that, unless it be given from above.

4. That whatever is maliciously said against them, it shall not affect them, to do them any hurt, *ver. 21.* Thou shalt not only be protected from the killing sword of war, but shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, which, like a scourge, is vexing and painful, tho' not mortal. The best men, and the most inoffensive, cannot even with their innocency secure themselves from calumny, reproach, and false accusation: From these a man cannot hide himself, but God can hide him, so that the most malicious slanders shall be so little heeded by him as not to disturb his peace; and so little heeded by others, as not to blemish his reputation: And the remainder of his wrath God can and doth restrain, for it is owing to the hold he hath of the consciences of bad men, that the scourge of the tongue is not the ruin of all the comforts of good men in this world.

5. That they shall have a holy security, and serenity of mind, arising from their hope and confidence in God, even in the worst of times. When dangers are most threatening, they shall be easy, believing themselves safe; and shall not be afraid of destruction, no not when they see it coming, *ver. 21.* nor of the beasts of the field, when they set upon them; or of men as cruel as beasts; nay, *at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh,* *ver. 22.* not so as to despise any of God's chastenings, or make a jest of his judgments, but so as to triumph in God, and his power and goodness, and therein to triumph over the world and all its grievances; to be not only easy, but cheerful and joyful in tribulation. Blessed Paul laughed at destruction, when he said, *O death where is thy sting!* when, in the name of all the saints, he defied all the calamities of this present time to separate us from the love of God, concluding that *in all these things we are more than conquerors,* *Rom. viii. 35, &c.* See *Isa. xxxvii. 22.*

6. That being at peace with God, there shall be a covenant of friendship between them and the whole creation, *ver. 23.* When thou walkest thy grounds, thou shalt not need to fear stumbling, for thou shalt be at league with the stones of the field, not to dash thy foot against any of them, nor shalt thou be in danger from the beasts of the field, for they all shall be at peace with thee; compare *Hos. ii. 18.* *I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field.* This implies, that while man is at enmity with his Maker, the inferior creatures are at war with him, but *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia,* our covenant with God is a covenant with all the creatures, that they shall do us no hurt, but be ready to serve us, and do us good.

7. That their houses and families shall be comfortable to them, *ver. 24.* Peace and piety in the family will make it so: thou shalt know and be assured that thy tabernacle is and shall be in peace, mayst be confident both of the present and future prosperity of it. That peace is thy tabernacle, so the word is, they that dwell in God, and are at home in him, peace is the house in which they dwell; thou shalt visit, *i. e.* enquire into the affairs of thy habitation, and take a review of them, and shalt not sin. (1.) God will provide a settlement for his people, mean perhaps and moveable, a cottage, a tabernacle, but a fixed and quiet habitation. Thou shalt not sin, or wander, *i. e.* as some understand it, thou shalt not be a fugitive and a vagabond, Cain's curse, but shalt dwell in the land, and verily, not uncertainly as vagrants, shalt thou be fed. (2.) Their

families shall be taken under the special protection of the divine providence, and shall prosper as far as is for their good. (3.) They shall be assured of peace, and of the continuance and entail of it; thou shalt know to thine unspeakable satisfaction, that peace is sure to thee and thine, having the word of God for it: Providence may change, but the promise cannot. (4.) They shall have wisdom to govern their families aright, to order their affairs with discretion, and to look well to the ways of their household, which is here called visiting their habitation; masters of families must not be strangers at home, but have a watchful eye over what they have, and what their servants do. (5.) They shall have grace to manage the concerns of their families after a godly sort, and not to sin in the management of them: They shall call their servants to account, without pride, passion, covetousness, worldliness, or the like; look into their affairs without discontent at what is, or distrust of what shall be. Family piety crowns family peace and prosperity: The greatest blessing both in our employments, and in our enjoyments, is to be kept from sin in them. When we are abroad, it is comfortable to hear that our tabernacle is in peace, and when we return home to visit our habitation, with satisfaction in our success, that we have not miscarried in our business, and with a good conscience that we have not offended God.

8. That their posterity shall be numerous and prosperous. Job had lost all his children, but, saith Eliphaz, if thou return to God, he will again build up thy family, and thy seed shall be many, and as great as ever thou wast, and thine offspring increasing and flourishing as the grass of the earth, (*ver. 25.*) and thou shalt know it. God has blessings in store for the seed of the faithful, which they shall have if they do not stand in their own light, and forfeit them by their folly. It is a comfort to parents to see the prosperity, especially the spiritual prosperity of their children; if they are truly good, they are truly great, how small a figure soever they make in the world.

9. That their death shall be seasonable, and they shall finish their course at length with joy and honour, *ver. 26.* It is a great mercy (1.) To live to a full age, and not to have the number of our months cut off in the midst. If the providence of God do not give us long life, if the grace of God give us to be satisfied with the time allotted us, we may be said to come to a full age. That man lives long enough that has done his work, and is fit for another world. (2.) To be willing to die, to come cheerfully to the grave, and not to be forced thither, as he whose soul was required of him. (3.) To die seasonably, as the corn is cut and housed when it is full ripe; not till then, but then not suffered to stand a day longer, lest it shed. Our times are in God's hand, it is well they are so, for he will take care that those who are his, die in the best time; however their death may seem to us untimely, it will be found not unseasonable.

In the last verse he recommends those promises to Job, (1.) As faithful sayings, which he might be confident of the truth of: *Lo, this we have searched, and so it is.* We have indeed received these things by tradition from our fathers, but we have not taken them upon trust, we have carefully searched them, have compared spiritual things with spiritual, have diligently studied them, and been confirmed in our belief of them, from our own observation and experience; and we are all of a mind that so it is. Truth is a treasure that is well worth digging for, diving for; and then we shall know both how to value it our selves, and how to communicate it to others, when we have taken pains in searching it. (2.) As well worthy of all acceptance, which he might improve to his great advantage! "hear it, and know thou it for thy good." It is not enough to hear and know the truth, but we must improve it, and be made wiser and better by it, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the commanding power of it. Know it for thy self, so the word is; with application to thy self, and thy own case; not only this is true, but this is true concerning me. That which we thus hear and know for our selves, we hear and know for our good: As the meat we digest we are nourished by. And that is indeed a good sermon that doth us good.

## CHAP. VI.

Eliphaz concluded his discourse with an air of assurance, very confident he was, that what he had said was so plain, and so pertinent, that nothing could be objected in answer to it. But tho' he that is first in his own cause seemeth just, yet his neighbour comes and searcheth him: Job is not convinced by all he had said, but still justifies himself in his complaints, and condemns him for the weakness of his arguing. (1.) He shews that he had just cause to complain as he did of his troubles, and so it would appear to any impartial judge, *ver. 2—7.* (2.) He continues his passionate wish, that he might speedily be cut off by the stroke of death, and so be eased of all his miseries, *ver. 8—13.* (3.) He reproves his friends for their uncharitable censures of him, and the unkind treatment they gave him, *ver. 14—30.* It must be owned that Job in all this spoke a deal of reason, but with a mixture of passion and human infirmity: And in this contest, as indeed in most contests, there was fault on both sides.



1. **B**UT Job answered and said, 2. Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! 5. For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up. 4. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. 5. Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder? 6. Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? 7. The things that my soul refused to touch, are as my sorrowful meat.

Eliphaz, in the beginning of his discourse, had been very sharp upon Job, and yet it doth not appear that Job gave him any interruption, but heard him patiently till he had said all he had to say: they that would make an impartial judgment of a discourse must hear it out, and take it entire. But when he had concluded, he makes his reply, in which he speaks very feelingly.

1. He represents his calamity in general as much heavier than either he had expressed it, or they had apprehended it, *ver. 2, 3*. He could not fully describe it, they would not fully apprehend it, or at least not own that they did. And therefore he would gladly appeal to a third person, that had but just weights and just balances, with which to weigh his grief and calamity, and would do it with an impartial hand; he wisheth that they would set his grief in one scale, and all the expressions of it, his calamity, in the other, and all the particulars of it, and (tho' he would not altogether justify himself in his grief, yet) they would find as he saith, *chap. xxiii. 2.* that *his stroke was heavier than his groaning*; for whatever his grief was, his calamity was *heavier than the sand of the sea*, it was complicated, it was aggravated, every grievance weighty, and altogether numerous as the sand: therefore (saith he) *my words are swallowed up*; i. e. therefore you must excuse both the brokenness and the bitterness of my expressions; therefore do not think it strange if my speech be not so fine and polite as that of an eloquent orator, or so grave and regular as that of a morose philosopher: no, in these circumstances I can pretend neither to the one nor to the other; my words are, as I am, quite swallowed up.

Now, (1.) He hereby complains of it as his unhappiness, that his friends undertook to administer spiritual physick to him, before they thoroughly understood his case, and knew the worst of it. It is seldom that those who are at ease themselves, rightly weigh the afflictions of the afflicted; every one feels most from his own burthen, few feel from other peoples. (2.) He excuseth the passionate expressions he had used when he cursed his day. Tho' he could not himself justify all he had said, yet he thought his friends should not thus violently condemn it, for really the case was extraordinary; and that might be connived at in such a man of sorrows as he now was, which in any common grief would by no means be allowed of. (3.) He speaks the charitable and compassionate sympathy of his friends with him, and hopes by representing the greatness of his calamity, to bring them to a better temper towards him. To those that are pained, it is some ease to be pitied.

2. He complains of the trouble and terror of mind he was in, as the worst part of his calamity, *ver. 4*. Herein he was a type of Christ, who in his sufferings complained most of the sufferings of his soul; *now is my soul troubled*, John xii. 27. *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*, Matth. xxvi. 37, 38. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matth. xxvii. 46. Poor Job sadly complains here, (1.) Of what he felt: *the arrows of the Almighty are within me*. It was not so much the troubles themselves he was under that put him into this confusion, his poverty, disgrace, and bodily pain, but that which cut him to the heart, and put him into this mighty toils was, to think, that the God he loved and served had brought all this upon him, and laid him under these marks of his displeasure. Note, Trouble of mind is the worst trouble: *a wounded spirit who can bear!* Whatever burthen of affliction, in body or estate, God is pleased to lay upon us, we may well afford to submit to it as long as he continues to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences; but if in either of these we be disturbed, our case is sad indeed, and very piteous. The way to prevent God's fiery darts of trouble, is with the shield of faith to quench Satan's fiery darts of temptation. Observe, He calls them the *arrows of the Almighty*; for it is an instance of the power of God above that of any man, that he can with his arrows reach the soul. He that made it can make his sword to approach to it. The poison or heat of these arrows is said to drink up his spirit, because it disturbed his reason, shook his resolution, exhausted his vigour, and threatened his life, and therefore his passionate expressions, tho' they could not be justified, yet might be excused. (2.) Of what he feared. He saw himself charged by the terrors of God, as by an army set in battle array, and surrounded by them: God by his terrors fought against him: as he had no comfort when he retired inward into his own bosom, so he had none when he looked upward towards heaven. He that used to be encouraged with the consolations of

God, not only wanted those, but was amazed with the terrors of God.

3. He reflects upon his friends for their severe censures of his complaints, and their unskilful management of his case. (1.) Their reproofs were causeless. He complained, it is true, now he was in this affliction, but he never used to complain, as those do who are of a fretful unquiet spirit, when he was in prosperity: he did not *bray when he had grass*, nor *low over his fodder*, *ver. 5*. But now he was utterly deprived of all his comforts, he must be a stock or a stone, and not have the sense of an ox or a wild ass, if he did not give some vent to his grief. He was forced to eat unfavoury meats, and was so poor, he had not a grain of salt, wherewith to relish them, nor to give a little taste to the white of an egg, which was now the choicest dish he had at his table, *ver. 6*. And even that food which when time was he would have scorned to touch, now he was glad of, and it was his sorrowful meat, *ver. 7*. Note, It is wisdom not to use ourselves or our children to be nice and dainty about meat and drink, because we know not how we or they may be reduced; nor how that which we now disdain may be made acceptable by necessity.

(2.) Their comforts were senseless and insipid; so some understand, *ver. 6, 7*. He complains he had nothing now offered him for his relief that was proper for him; no cordial, nothing to revive and cheer his spirits; what they had afforded was in itself as tasteless as the white of an egg, and when applied to him, as loathsome and burthensome as the most sorrowful meat. I am sorry he should say thus of what Eliphaz had excellently well said, *chap. v. 8, &c.* But peevish spirits are too apt thus to abuse their comforters.

8. O that I might have my request! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! 9. Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand and cut me off. 10. Then should I yet have comfort, yea, I would harden myself in sorrow; let him not spare, for I have not concealed the words of the holy One. 11. What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life? 12. Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? 13. Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?

Ungoverned passion often grows more violent when it meets with some rebuke and check: the troubled sea rages most when it dasheth to a rock. Job had been courting death, as that which would be the happy period of his miseries, *chap. iii*. For this Eliphaz had gravely reprov'd him, but he, instead of un- saying it, saith it here again with more vehemence than before, and it is as ill said as almost any thing we meet with in all his discourses; and is recorded for our admonition, not our imitation.

1. He is still most passionately desirous to die, as if it were not possible that he should ever see good days again in this world, or that by the exercise of grace and devotion he might make even these days of affliction good days: he could see no end of his trouble but death, and had not patience to wait the time appointed for that. He has a request to make, there is a thing he longs for, *ver. 8*. And what is that? One would think it should be, *that it would please God to deliver me*, and restore me to my prosperity again; no, *that it would please God to destroy me*, *ver. 9*. As once he let loose his hand to make me poor, and then to make me sick, let him loose it once more to put an end to my life. Let him give the fatal stroke, it shall be to me the *coup de grace*, as in France they call the last blow which dispatches them that are broken on the wheel. There was a time when *destruction from the Almighty was a terror to Job*, *chap. xxxi. 23*. Yet now he courts the destruction of the flesh, but in hopes that the spirit should be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Observe, Tho' Job was extremely desirous of death, and very angry at its delays, yet he did not offer to destroy himself, nor to take away his own life, only he begged that it would *please God to destroy him*. Seneca's morals, which recommend self-murther as the lawful redress of insupportable grievances, were not then known, nor will ever be entertained by any that have the least regard to the law of God and nature. How uneasy soever the soul's confinement in the body may be, it must by no means break prison, but wait for a fair discharge.

2. He puts this desire into a prayer, that God would grant him this request, that it would please God to do this for him. It was his sin so passionately to desire the hastning of his own death, and offering up that desire to God made it no better; nay, what looked ill in his wish, looked worse in his prayer, for we ought not to ask any thing of God, but what we can ask in faith, and we cannot ask any thing in faith but what is agreeable to the will of God. Passionate prayers are the worst of passionate expressions, for we should lift up pure hands without wrath.

3. He promiseth himself effectual relief, and the redress of all his grievances by the stroke of death, *ver. 10*. *Then should I yet have comfort*, which now I have not, nor ever expect till then.



See, (1.) The vanity of human life; so uncertain a good is it, that oftentimes it proves mens greatest burthen, and nothing so desirable as to get clear of it. Let grace make us willing to part with it whenever God calls; for it may so happen, that even sense may make us desirous to part with it before he calls. (2.) The hope which the righteous have in their death. If Job had not had a good conscience, he could not have spoken with this assurance of comfort on the other side death, which turns the tables between the rich man and Lazarus, *now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

4. He challengeth death to do its worst. If he could not die without the dreadful prefaces of bitter pains, and agonies, and strong convulsions: if he must be racked before he be executed, yet in prospect of dying at last, he would make nothing of dying pangs. *I would harden my self in sorrow,* would open my breast to receive death's darts, and not shrink from them, let him not spare, I desire no mitigation of that pain which will put a happy period to all my pains. Rather than not die, let me die so as to feel my self die. These are passionate words which might better have been spared. We should soften ourselves in sorrow, that we may receive the good impressions of it, and by the sadness of the countenance, our hearts being made tender, may be made better; but if we harden ourselves, we provoke God to proceed in his controversy, *for when he judgeth he will overcome.* And it is great presumption to dare the Almighty, and to say, *let him not spare, for are we stronger than he?* 1 Cor. x. 22. We are much indebted to sparing mercy, it is bad indeed with us when we are sick of that. Let us rather say with David, *O spare me a little.*

5. He grounds his comfort upon the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had been faithful and firm to his profession of religion, and some way useful and serviceable to the glory of God in his generation, *I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.* Observe, 1. Job had the words of the Holy One committed to him. The people of God were at that time blessed with divine revelation. 2. It was his comfort that he had not concealed them, had not received the grace of God therein in vain. (1.) He had not kept them from himself, but had given them full scope to operate upon him, and in every thing to guide and govern him. He had not stifled his convictions, *imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness,* nor done any thing to hinder the digestion of this spiritual food, and the operation of this spiritual physick. Let us never conceal God's word from ourselves; but always receive it in the light of it. (2.) He had not kept them to himself, but had been ready on all occasions to communicate his knowledge for the good of others; was never ashamed or afraid to own the word of God to be his rule, nor remiss in his endeavours to bring others into an acquaintance with it. Note, Those, and those only, may promise themselves comfort in death, who are good and do good while they live.

6. He justifies himself in this extream desire of death, from the deplorable condition he was now in, *ver. 11, 12.* Eliphaz, in the close of his discourse, had put him in hopes that he should yet see a good issue of his troubles; but poor Job puts these cordials away from him, refuseth to be comforted, abandons himself to despair, and very ingenuously, yet perversely, argues against the encouragements that were given him. Disconsolate spirits will reason strangely against themselves. In answer to the pleasing prospects Eliphaz had flattered him with, he here intimates,

(1.) That he had no reason to expect any such thing. *What is my strength that I should hope?* You see how I am weakened and brought low, how unable I am to grapple with my distempers, and therefore what reason have I to hope that I should out-live them, and see better days? *Is my strength the strength of stones?* Are my muscles brass, and sinews steel! No, they are not, and therefore I cannot hold out always in this pain and misery, but must needs sink under the load. Had I strength to grapple with my distemper, I might hope to look through it; but alas! I have not, the *weakening of my strength in the way,* will certainly be the *shortning of my days,* Psal. cii. 23. Note, All things considered we have no reason to count upon the long continuance of life in this world. *What is our strength?* It is depending strength, we have no more strength than God gives us, for in him we live and move: it is decaying strength, we are daily spending upon the quick stock of it, and by degrees it will be exhausted. It is disproportionable to the encounters we may meet with; what is our strength to be depended upon, when two or three days sickness will make us weak as water? Instead of expecting a long life, we have reason to admire that we have lived hitherto, and to see ourselves hastning off apace.

(2.) That he had no reason to desire any such thing: *What is my end that I should desire to prolong my life?* What comfort can I promise myself in life, comparable to the comfort I promise myself in death? Note, Those that through grace are ready for another world, cannot see much to invite their stay in this world, or to make them fond of it. That if it be God's will we may do him more service, and may get to be fitter and riper for heaven, is an end for which we may wish the prolonging of life, in subserviency to our chief end: but otherwise what can we propose to ourselves in desiring to tarry here? The burthens of life will be ever the longer the more grievous, *Ecc. xii. 1.* And the

delights of life will be ever the longer the less pleasant, 2 Sam. xix. 34. We have already seen the best of this world, but we are not sure that we have seen the worst of it.

7. He obviates the suspicion of his being delirious, *ver. 13.* *Is not my help in me?* i. e. Have I not the use of my reason, with which, I thank God, I can help my self, tho' you do not help me? Do you think wisdom is driven quite from me, and that I am gone distracted? No, I am not mad, most noble Eliphaz, but *speak the words of truth and soberness.* Note, Those who have grace in them, who have the evidence of it, and have it in exercise, have wisdom in them, which will be their help in the worst of times. *Sat lucis intus.*

14. To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty. 15. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away: 16. Which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: 17. What time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. 18. The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish. 19. The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. 20. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed. 21. For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down, and are afraid.

Eliphaz had been very severe in his censures of Job, and his companions, tho' as yet they had said little, yet had intimated their concurrence with him: their unkindness therein poor Job here complains of, as an aggravation of his calamity, and a further excuse of his desire to die, for what satisfaction could he ever expect in this world, when those that should be his comforters thus proved his tormenters?

1. He shews what reason he had to expect kindness from them. His expectation was grounded upon the common principles of humanity, *ver. 14.* To him that is afflicted, and that is wasting and melting under his affliction, pity should be shewed from his friend, and he that doth not shew that pity, *forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.* Note, 1. Compassion is a debt owing to those that are in affliction. The least which those that are at ease can do for those that are pained and in anguish, is to pity them; to manifest the sincerity of a tender concern for them, and sympathize with them; to take cognizance of their case, enquire into their grievances, hear their complaints, and mingle our tears with theirs; to comfort them, and do all we can to help and relieve them: this well becomes the members of the same body, who should feel from the grievances of their fellow-members, not knowing how soon the same may be their own. 2. Inhumanity is impiety, and irreligion. *He that with-holds compassion from his friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.* So the Chaldee. *How dwells the love of God in that man?* 1 John iii. 17. Surely those have no fear of the rod of God upon themselves who have no compassion for those that feel the smart of it. See *Jam. i. 27.* 3. Troubles are the trials of friendship. When a man is afflicted, he will see who are his friends indeed, and who are but pretenders, for a brother is born for adversity, *Prov. xvii. 17.*—*xviii. 24.*

2. He shews how wretchedly he was disappointed in his expectations from them, *ver. 15.* My brethren, who would have helped me, have dealt deceitfully as a brook. They came by appointment with a great deal of ceremony to mourn with him, and to comfort him, *chap. ii. 11.* and some mighty things were expected from such great men, such good men, such wise, learned, knowing men, and Job's particular friends; none questioned but that the drift of their discourses would be to comfort Job with the remembrance of his former piety, the assurance of God's favour to him, and the prospect of a glorious issue; but instead of this, they most barbarously fall upon him with their reproaches and censures, condemn him as an hypocrite, insult over his calamities, and pour vinegar instead of oil into his wounds, and thus they dealt deceitfully with him. Note, 1. It is fraud and deceit not only to violate our engagements to our friends, but to frustrate their just expectations from us; especially the expectations we have raised. 2. It is our wisdom to cease from man; we cannot expect too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. It is no new thing even for brethren to *deal deceitfully,* Jer. ix. 4, 5. Mic. vii. 5. let us therefore put our confidence in the rock of ages, not in broken reeds, in the fountain of life, not in broken cisterns. God will out-do our hopes as much as men come short of them.

This disappointment which he met with, he here illustrates by the failing of brooks in summer.

1. The similitude is very elegant, *ver. 15—20.* (1.) Their pretensions are fitly compared to the great shew which the brooks make when they are swelled with the waters of a land-flood, by the melting of the ice and snow, which makes them blackish or muddy, *ver. 16.* (2.) His expectations from them, which



their coming so solemnly to comfort him had raised, he compares to the expectation which the weary thirsty travellers have, of finding water in the summer there where they have often seen it in great abundance in the winter, *ver. 19.* *The troops of Tema and Sheba*, the caravans of the merchants of those countries, whose roads lay through the deserts of Arabia, looked and waited for supply of water from those brooks: hard by here, saith one, a little further, saith another, when I last travelled this way there was water enough, we shall have that to refresh us. Where we have met with relief and comfort we are apt to expect it again, and yet it doth not follow: for, (3.) The disappointment of his expectation is here compared to the confusion which seizeth the poor travellers, when they find heaps of sand where they expected floods of water. In the winter, when they were not thirsty, there was water enough. Every one will applaud and admire those that are full, and in prosperity, but in the heat of summer, when they needed water, then it failed them, was consumed, *ver. 17.* it was turned aside, *ver. 18.* When those that are rich and high are sunk and impoverished, and stand in need of comfort, then those that before gathered about them stand aloof from them, that before commended them are forward to run them down: thus they that raise their expectations high from the creature will find it fail them then when it should help them; whereas they that make God their confidence have help *in the time of need*, *Heb. iv. 16.* They that make gold their hope sooner or later will be ashamed of it, and of their confidence in it, (*Ezek. vii. 19.*) and the greater their confidence was the greater their shame will be, *they were confounded because they had hoped*, *ver. 20.* We prepare confusion for ourselves by our vain hopes: the reeds break under us, because we lean upon them. If we build a house upon the sand we shall certainly be confounded, for it will fall in the storm, and we must thank ourselves for being such fools as to expect it would stand. We are not deceived unless we deceive ourselves.

2. The application is very close, *ver. 21.* *For now ye are nothing.* They seemed to be somewhat, but in conference they added nothing to him. Allude to *Gal. ii. 6.* He was never the wiser, never the better, for the visit they made him. Note, Whatever complacency we may take, or whatever confidence we may put in creatures, how great soever they may seem, and how dear soever they may be to us, one time or other we shall say of them, *Now ye are nothing.* When Job was in prosperity, his friends were something to him, he took complacency in them and their society, but *now ye are nothing*, now I can find no comfort but in God. It were well for us if we had always such convictions of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to make us happy, as we have sometimes had, or shall have, on a sick-bed, a death-bed, or in trouble of conscience: *Now ye are nothing.* You are not what you have been, what you should be, what you pretend to be, what I thought you would have been, for you see my casting down, and are afraid: When you saw me in my elevation, you caressed me; but now you see me in my dejection, you are shy of me; are afraid of shewing your selves kind, lest I should take the boldness from thence to beg something of you, or to borrow (compare *ver. 22.*) are afraid, lest if you own me, you should be obliged to keep me. Perhaps they were afraid of catching his distemper, or of coming within smell of the noisomeness of it. It is not good, either out of pride or niceness, for love of our purses, or of our bodies, to be shy of those in distress, and afraid of coming near them. Their case may soon be our own.

22. Did I say, Bring unto me? or give a reward for me of your substance? 23. Or deliver me from the enemies hand? or redeem me from the hand of the mighty? 24. Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. 25. How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove? 26. Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind? 27. Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and you dig a pit for your friend. 28. Now therefore be content, look upon me, for it is evident unto you, if I lye. 29. Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness is in it. 30. Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?

Poor Job goes on here to upbraid his friends with their unkindness, and the hard usage they gave him. He here appeals to themselves concerning several things which tended both to justify him and condemn them. If they would but think impartially, and speak as they thought, they could not but own,

1. That tho' he was necessitous, yet he was not craving, nor burthen some to his friends: Those that are so, whose troubles serve them to beg by, are commonly less pitied than the silent poor. Job would be glad to see his friends, but he did not say, *Bring unto me*, *ver. 22.* or *Deliver me*, *ver. 23.* He did not desire to put them to any expence, did not send abroad to urge his friends either (1.) To make a collection for him, to set him up again in the

world, tho' he could plead that his losses came upon him by the hand of God, and not by any fault or folly of his own; that he was utterly ruined and impoverished; that he had lived in good fashion, and when he had wherewithal, was charitable and ready to help those that were in distress; that his friends were rich, and able to help him; yet he did not say, *Give me of your substance.* Note, A good man, when troubled himself, is afraid of being troublesome to his friends. Or, (2.) To raise the country for him, to help him to recover his cattle out of the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or to make reprisals upon them: Did I send for you to deliver me out of the hand of the mighty? No, I never expected you should either expose your selves to any danger, or put your selves to any charge upon my account; I will rather sit down content under my affliction, and make the best of it, than sponge upon my friends. St Paul worked with his hands, that he might not be burthen some to any. Job's not asking their help, did not excuse them from offering it when he needed it, and it was in the power of their hands to give it, but it much aggravated their unkindness, when he desired no more from them but a good look and a good word, and yet could not obtain that. From man oftentimes, even when we expect little, yet we have less, but from God, even when we expect much, yet we have more, *Eph. iii. 20.*

2. That tho' he differed in opinion from them, yet he was not obstinate, but ready to yield to conviction, and to strike sail to truth, as soon as ever it was made to appear to him that he was in an error, *ver. 24, 25.* If instead of invidious reflections, and uncharitable insinuations, you will give me plain instructions and solid arguments, that shall carry their own evidence along with them, I am ready to acknowledge my error, and own my self in a fault; *Teach me, and I will hold my tongue*, for I have often found with pleasure and wonder *how forcible right words are*: But the method you take will never make proselytes, *what doth your arguing reprove?* Your hypothesis is false, your surmises groundless, your management weak, and your application peevish and uncharitable. Note, 1. Fair reasoning has a commanding power, and it is a wonder if men are not conquered by it; but railing and foul language is impotent and foolish, and it is no wonder if men are exasperated and hardened by it. 2. It is the undoubted character of every honest man, that he is truly desirous to have his mistakes rectified, and to be made to understand wherein he has erred; and that right words, when they appear to him to be so, tho' contrary to his former sentiments, are both forcible and acceptable.

3. That tho' he had been indeed in a fault, yet they ought not to have given him such hard usage, *ver. 26, 27.* *Do you imagine*, or contrive with a great deal of art (for so the word signifies) *to reprove words*, some passionate expressions of mine in this desperate condition, as if they were certain indications of reigning piety and atheism? A little candour and charity would have served to excuse them, and to put a better construction upon them. Shall a man's spiritual state be judged of by some rash and hasty words, which a surprizing trouble extorts from him? Is it fair? Is it kind? Is it just to criticise in such a case? Would you your selves be served thus? Two things aggravated their unkind treatment of him. (1.) That they took advantage of his weakness, and the helpless condition he was in. *Ye overwhelm the fatherless*, a proverbial expression, speaking that which is most barbarous and inhuman. The fatherless cannot secure themselves from insults, which emboldens men of base and fordid spirits to insult them and trample upon them, and you do so by me. Job, being a childless father, thought himself as much exposed to injury as a fatherless child, (*Psal. cxxvii. 5.*) and had reason to take it ill at those who therefore triumphed over him. Let those who overwhelm and overpower them that upon any account may be looked upon as fatherless, know that therein they not only put off the compassions of man, but fight against the compassions of God, who is and will be a father of the fatherless, and a helper of the helpless. (2.) That they made pretence of kindness: *You dig a pit for your friend*, not only you are unkind to me, who am your friend, but under colour of friendship you ensnare me. When they came to see and sit with him, he thought he might speak his mind freely to them, and that the more bitter his complaints to them were, the more they would have endeavoured to comfort him: This made him take a greater liberty than otherwise he would have done. David, tho' he smothered his resentments when the wicked were before him, it is likely, would have given vent to them, if none had been by but friends, *Psal. xxxix. 1.* But this freedom of speech, which their professions of concern for him, made him use, had exposed him to their censures, and so they might be said to dig a pit for him. Thus when our hearts are hot within us, what is ill done, we are apt to misrepresent, as if done designedly.

4. That tho' he had let fall some passionate expressions, yet for the main he was in the right, and that his afflictions, tho' very extraordinary, did not prove him to be an hypocrite, or wicked man. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let it go.

For the evincing of it, he here appeals,

1. To what they saw in him, *ver. 28.* *Be content*, and look upon me, what do you see in me that speaks me either a mad man, or an ill man? Nay, look in my face, and you may discern there the indications of a patient and submissive spirit, for all



this. Let the shew of my countenance witness for me, that tho' I have curst my day, I do not curse my God. Or rather, look upon my ulcers, and fore-boils, and by them it will be evident to you that I do not lye, *i. e.* that I do not complain without cause. Let your own eyes convince you that my condition is very sad, and I do not quarrel with God, by making it worse than it is.

2. To what they heard from him, *ver.* 30. You hear what I have to say now, *Is there iniquity in my tongue?* That iniquity that you charge me with? Have I blasphemed God, or renounced him? Are not my present arguings right? Do not you perceive by what I say that I can discern perverse things? I can discover your fallacies and mistakes, and if I were my self in an error, I could perceive it: Whatever you think of me, I know what I say.

3. To their own second and sober thoughts, *ver.* 29. *Return, I pray you,* consider the thing over again, without prejudice and partiality, and let not the result be iniquity, let it not be an unrighteous sentence, and you will find *my righteousness is in it*, *i. e.* I am in the right in this matter; and that tho' I cannot keep my temper as I should, I keep my integrity, and have not said, or done, or suffered, any thing which will prove me other than an honest man. A just cause desires nothing more but a just hearing, and, if need be, a re-hearing.

## C H A P. VII.

*Job in this chapter goes on in expressing the bitter sense he had of his calamities, and to justify himself in his desire of death. (1.) He complains to himself and his friends of his troubles, and the constant toss he was in, ver. 1—6. (2.) He turns to God, and expostulates with him, ver. 7. ad finem. In which (1.) He pleads the final period which death puts to our present state, ver. 7—10. (2.) He passionately complains of the miserable condition he was now in, ver. 11—16. (3.) He wonders God will thus contend with him, and begs for the pardon of his sins, and a speedy release out of his miseries, ver. 17—21. It is hard to methodize the speeches of one who owned himself almost desperate, chap. vi. 26.*

1. **I** *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?* 2. As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: 3. So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. 4. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. 5. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust, my skin is broken, and become loathsome. 6. My days are swifter than a weavers shuttle, and are spent without hope.

Job is here excusing what he could not justify, even his inordinate desire of death. Why should he not wish for the period of life, which would be the period of his miseries? To enforce this reason he argues,

1. From the general condition of man upon earth, *ver.* 1. He is of few days, and full of trouble. Every man must die quickly, and every man has some reason (more or less) to desire to die quickly, and therefore why should you impute it to me as so heinous a crime, that I wish to die quickly? Or thus: pray mistake not my desires of death, as if I thought the time appointed of God could be anticipated: no, I know very well that is fixed, only in such language as that I take the liberty to express my present uneasiness. *Is there not an appointed time (a warfare, so the word is) to man upon earth? and are not his days here like the days of an hireling?* Observe,

1. Man's present place: he is upon earth, which God has given to the children of men, *Psal.* cxv. 16. This speaks man's meanness and inferiority: how much below the inhabitants of yonder elevated and refined regions above is he situated! It also speaks God's mercy to him: he is yet upon the earth, not under it; on earth, not in hell. Our time on earth is limited and short, according to the narrow bounds of this earth, but heaven cannot be measured, nor the days of heaven numbred.

2. His continuance in that place: is there not a time appointed for his abode here? Yes, certainly there is, and it is easy to say by whom the appointment is made, even by him that made us and set us here. We are not to be on this earth always, nor long, but for a certain time, which is determined by him in whose hand our times are. We are not to think that we are governed by the blind fate of the Stoicks, or by the blind fortune of the Epicureans, but by the wise, holy, and sovereign, counsel of God.

3. His condition during that continuance: man's life is a warfare, and as the days of an hireling. We are every one of us to look upon ourselves in this world, (1.) As soldiers, exposed to hardship, and in the midst of enemies, must serve and be under command; and when our warfare is accomplished, we must be

cashiered and disbanded; dismissed either with shame, or honour, according to what we have done in the body. (2.) As day-labourers, that have the work of the day to do in its day, and must make up their account at night.

2. From his own condition at this time. He had as much reason he thought to wish for death, as a poor servant or hireling that is tired with his work has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall receive his penny and go to rest, *ver.* 2. As welcome as the light of the morning is to the watchman, *Psal.* cxxx. 6. the darkness of the night is to the labourer. The God of nature has provided for the repose of labourers, and no wonder they desire it. *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet*, *Eccl.* v. 12. No pleasure more grateful, more relishing, to the luxurious, than rest to the laborious; nor can any rich man take so much satisfaction in the return of his rent-days, as the hireling in his day's wages. The comparison is plain, the reddition is concise, and somewhat obscure, but we must supply a word or two and then it is easy: exactness of language is not to be expected from one in Job's condition. As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, so, and for the same reason, I earnestly desire death, for I am made to possess, &c. Hear his complaint:

1. His days were useless, and had been so a great while; he was wholly taken off from business, and utterly unfit for it. Every day was a burthen to him, because he was in no capacity of doing good, or of spending it to any purpose. *Et vitæ partem non attigit ullam*. He could not fill up his time with any thing that would turn to account, and this he calls possessing months of vanity, *ver.* 3. It very much increaseth the affliction of sickness and age to a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much upon it that they are days in which he has no pleasure, as that they are days in which he doth no good; on that account they are months of vanity: but when we are disabled to work for God, if we will but sit still quietly for him it is all one, we shall be accepted.

2. His nights were restless, *ver.* 3, 4. The night relieves the toil and fatigue of the day, not only to the labourers, but to the sufferers: if a sick man can but get a little sleep in the night, it helps nature, and it is hoped he shall do well, *John* xi. 12. However, be the trouble what it will, sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, and griefs that afflict us; it is the parenthesis of our sorrows: but poor Job could not gain this relief. (1.) His nights were wearisome, and instead of taking any rest he did but tire himself more with tossing to and fro until morning. Those that are in great uneasiness through pain of body, or anguish of mind, think, by changing sides, changing places, changing postures, to get some ease, but while the cause is the same within, it is all to no purpose: it is but a resemblance of a fretful discontented spirit, that is ever shifting, but never easy. This made him dread the night as much as the servant desires it, and, when he lay down, to say, *when will the night be gone?* (2.) These wearisome nights were appointed to him; God who determines the times before appointed, had allotted him such nights as these. Whatever is at any time grievous to us it is good to see it appointed for us, that we may acquiesce in the event not only as unavoidable because appointed, but as therefore designed for some holy end. When we have comfortable nights we must see them also appointed to us, and be thankful for them, many better than we have wearisome nights.

3. His body was noisome, *ver.* 5. His sores bred worms, the scabs were like clods of dust, and his skin was broken: so evil was the disease which cleaved fast unto him. See what vile bodies we have, and what little reason we have to pamper them, or be proud of them; they have in themselves the principles of their own corruption: as fond as we are of them now, the time may come when we may loath them, and long to get rid of them. Modern searchers have discovered multitudes of worms in human bodies.

4. His life was hastning apace towards a period, *ver.* 6. He thought he had no reason to expect a long life, for he found himself declining fast, *ver.* 6. *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle*, *i. e.* my time is now but short, and there are but few sands more in my glass, which will speedily run out. Natural motions are most swift near the centre, Job thought his days run swiftly, because he thought he should soon be at his journey's end; he looked upon them as good as spent already, and he was therefore without hope of being restored to his former prosperity. It is applicable to man's life in general; our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown from one side of the web to the other in the twinkling of an eye, and then back again, to and fro, until at length it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried, and then we cut off like a weaver our life, *Isa.* xxxviii. 12. Time hastens on apace, the motion of it cannot be stopped, and when it is past it cannot be recalled. While we are living, we are sowing, (*Gal.* vi. 8.) so we are weaving; every day like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it; many weave the spider's web, which will fail them, *Job* viii. 14. If we are weaving to ourselves holy garments, and robes of righteousness, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed, and every man shall reap as he sowed, and wear as he wove.



7. O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. 8. The eye of him that hath seen me, shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not. 9. As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave, shall come up no more. 10. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. 11. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. 12. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me? 13. When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint: 14. Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions. 15. So that my soul chuseth strangling, and death rather than my life. 16. I lothe it, I would not live alway: let me alone, for my days are vanity.

Job observing perhaps that his friends, tho' they would not interrupt him in his discourse, yet began to grow weary, and not to heed much what he said, here turns to God, and speaks to him. If men will not hear us, God will; if men cannot help us he can; for his arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy. Yet we may not go to school to Job here to learn how to speak to God, for it must be confessed there is a great mixture of passion and corruption in what he here saith: but if God be not extremum to mark what his people say amiss, let us also make the best of it. Job is here begging of God either to ease him or end him.

He here represents himself to God,

1. As a dying man, surely and speedily dying. It is good for us when we are sick to think and speak of death, for sickness is sent on purpose to put us in mind of it; and if we be duly mindful of it ourselves, we may in faith put God in mind of it, as Job doth here, *ver. 7. O remember that my life is wind*: he recommends himself to God as an object of his pity and compassion, with this consideration, that he was a very weak, frail creature, his abode in this world short and uncertain, his removal out of it sure and speedy, and his return to it again impossible, and never to be expected: that his life was wind, as the lives of all men are, noisy perhaps and bustling like the wind, but vain and empty, soon gone, and when gone, past recall: God had compassion on Israel, *remembering that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again*, *Psal. lxxviii. 38, 39. Observe,*

(1.) The pious reflections Job makes upon his own life and death. Such plain truths as these concerning the shortness and vanity of life, the unavoidableness and irrecoverableness of death, then do us good when we think and speak of them with application to ourselves. Let us consider then,

1. That we must shortly take our leave of all the things that are seen, that are temporal. The eye of the body must be closed, and shall no more see good, the good which the most of men set their hearts upon, for their cry is, *who will make us to see good!* *Psal. iv. 6.* If we be such fools as to place our happiness in visible good things, what will become of us when they shall be for ever hid from our eyes, and we shall no more see good? Let us therefore live by that faith, which is the substance and evidence of things not seen.

2. That we must then remove to an invisible world: *the eye of him that hath here seen me shall see me no more there.* It is *Adams* an unseen state, *ver. 8.* Death removes our lovers and friends into darkness, *Psal. lxxxviii. ult.* and will shortly remove us out of their sight; when we go hence we shall be seen no more, *Psal. xxxix. ult.* but go to converse with the things that are not seen, that are eternal.

3. That God can easily, and in a moment, put an end to our lives, and send us to another world, *ver. 8. Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not*: thou canst look me into eternity, frown me into the grave, when thou plearest.

*Shouldst thou, displeas'd, give me a frowning look,  
I sink, I die, as if with lightning struck.*

Sir R. Blackmore.

He takes away our breath, and we die; nay, he but looks on the earth, and it trembleth, *Psal. civ. 29, 32.*

4. That when we are once removed to another world, we must never return to this. There is constant passing from this world to the other, but no repassing. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum.* Therefore, Lord, shew me kindness when I am here, for I shall return no more to receive kindness in this world: Or, therefore, Lord, be so kind as to ease me by death, for that will be a perpetual ease, I shall return no more to the calamities of this life. When we are dead we are gone to return no more, (1.) From our house under ground, *ver. 9. He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more*, until the general resurrection, shall come up no more to his place in this world. Dying is work that is

to be done but once, and therefore it had need be well done: an error there is past retrieve. This is illustrated by the blotting out and scattering of a cloud. It is consumed and vanisheth away, is resolved into air, and never knits again: other clouds arise, but the same cloud never returns; so a new generation of the children of men is raised up, but the former generation is quite consumed, and vanisheth away. When we see a cloud which looked great, as if it would eclipse the sun and drown the earth, of a sudden dispersed and disappearing, say, just such a thing is the life of man, it is *a vapour that appears for a little while, and then vanisheth away.* (2.) To return no more to our house above ground, *ver. 10: He shall return no more to his house, to the possession and enjoyment of it, to the business and delights of it*: others will take possession and keep it till they also resign to another generation. The rich man in hell desired Lazarus might be sent to his house, knowing it was to no purpose to ask that he might have leave to go himself. Glorified saints shall return no more to the cares, and burthens, and sorrows, of their house; nor damned sinners to the gaieties and pleasures of their house. Their place shall no more know them, no more own them, have no more acquaintance with them, nor be any more under their influence. It concerns us to secure a better place when we die, for this will no more own us.

(2.) The passionate inference he draws from it: from these premises he might have drawn a better conclusion than he doth, *ver. 11. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak, I will complain.* Holy David when he had been meditating on the frailty of human life, made a contrary use of it, *Psal. xxxix. 9. I was dumb, and opened not my mouth*: but Job finding himself near expiring, hastens as much to make his complaint, as if he had been to make his last will and testament, or as if he could not die in peace until he had given vent to his passion. When we have but a few breaths to draw, we should spend them in the holy, gracious, breathings of faith and prayer, not in the noisome, noxious, breathings of sin and corruption. Better die praying and praising than die complaining and quarrelling.

2. As a distempered man, sorely and grievously distempered, both in body and mind. In this part of his representation he is very peevish, as if God dealt hardly with him, and laid upon him more than was meet. *Am I a sea, or a whale?* *ver. 12.* A raging sea that must be kept within bounds, to check its proud waves, or an unruly whale that must be restrained by force from devouring all the fishes of the sea? Am I so strong that there needs so much ado to hold me? So boisterous, that no less than all these mighty bonds of affliction will serve to tame me, and keep me within compass? We are very apt when we are in affliction to complain of God and his providence, as if he laid more restraint upon us than there is occasion for; whereas we are never in heaviness but when there is need, nor more than, upon some account or other, there is need.

1. He complains that he could not rest in his bed, *ver. 13, 14.* There we promise ourselves some repose when we are fatigued with labour, pain, or travel; *my bed shall comfort me, and my couch shall ease my complaint*, sleep will for a time give me some relief; it useth to do so; it is appointed for that end, many a time it hath eased us, and we have awaked refreshed, and with new vigour. When it is so, we have great reason to be thankful; but it was not so with poor Job, his bed, instead of comforting him, terrified him; and his couch, instead of easing his complaint, added to it; for if he dropped asleep, he was disturbed with his frightful dreams, and when those awaked him still he was haunted with dreadful apparitions. This was it that made the night so unwelcome and wearisome to him as it was, *ver. 4. When shall I arise?* Note, God can when he pleaseth meet us with terror there, where we promise ourselves ease and repose: nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves, and as we have often contracted guilt by the roivings of an un sanctified fancy, he can likewise by the power of our own imagination create us a great deal of grief, and so make that our punishment which has often been our sin. Job's dreams, tho' they might partly arise from his distemper (in fevers, or small-pox, when the body is all over sore, it is common for the sleep to be unquiet) yet we have reason to think Satan had a hand in them, who delights to terrify those whom it is out of his reach to destroy; but Job looked up to God, who permitted Satan to do this, thou scarest me, and mistook Satan's mormos and bugbears, for the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him. We have reason to pray to God that our dreams may neither defile nor disquiet us, neither tempt us to sin, nor torment us with fear, that he who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, will keep us when we slumber and sleep, that the devil may not then do us a mischief, either as an insinuating serpent, or as a roaring lion; and to bless God if we lie down and our sleep is sweet, and we are not thus scared.

2. He covets to rest in his grave, that bed where there are no tossings to and fro, nor any frightful dreams, *ver. 15, 16. (1.)* He was sick of life, and hated the thoughts of it: I loath it, I have had enough of it, I would not live alway. Not only not live alway in this condition, in pain and misery, but not live alway in the most easy and prosperous condition; to be continually



ally in danger of being thus reduced: *my days are vanity* at the best, empty of solid comfort, exposed to real griefs, and I would not be for ever tied to such uncertainty. Note, A good man would not (if he might) live always in this world, no not tho' it smile upon him, because it is a world of sin and temptation, and he hath a better world in prospect. (2.) He was fond of death, and pleased himself with the thoughts of it: his soul (his judgment he thought, but really it was his passion) chose strangling and death rather; any death rather than such a life as this. Doubtless this was Job's infirmity, for tho' a good man would not wish to live always in this world, and would chuse strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will be content to live as long as pleaseth God, not chuse them rather than life, because life is our opportunity of glorifying God and getting ready for heaven.

17. What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him? 18. And that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment? 19. How long wilt thou not depart from me? nor let me alone 'till I swallow down my spittle? 20. I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself? 21. And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

Job here reasons with God,

1. Concerning his dealings with man in general, *ver. 17, 18.* What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? This may be looked upon either, (1.) As a passionate reflection upon the proceedings of divine justice; as if the great God did diminish and disparage himself in contending with man. Great men think it below them to take cognizance of those who are much their inferiors, so far as to reprove and correct their follies and indecencies, why then doth God magnify man, by visiting him and trying him, and making so much ado about him? Why will he thus pour all his forces upon one that is such an unequal match for him? why will he visit him with afflictions, which, like a quotidian ague, returns as duly and constantly as the morning light, and try every moment what he can bear? We mistake God, and the nature of his providence, if we think it any lessening to him to take notice of the meanest of his creatures. Or, (2.) As a pious admiration of the condescensions of divine grace, like that, *Psal. viii. 4.—cxliv. 3.* He owns God's favour to man in general, even then when he complains of his own particular troubles. What is man, miserable man, a poor, mean, weak, creature, that thou, the great and glorious God, shouldst deal with him as thou dost? What is man, (1.) That thou shouldst put such honour upon him; shouldst magnify him, by taking him into covenant and communion with thy self? (2.) That thou shouldst concern thy self so much about him, shouldst set thine heart upon him, as dear to thee, and one thou hast a kindness for? (3.) That thou shouldst visit him with thy compassions every morning, as we daily visit a particular friend, or as the physician visits his patients every morning to help them? (4.) That thou shouldst try him, should feel his pulse and observe his motions every moment, as in care about him, and jealous over him? That such a worm of the earth as man is, should be the darling and favourite of Heaven, is what we have reason for ever to admire.

2. Concerning his dealings with him in particular. Observe, 1. The complaint he makes of his afflictions; which he here aggravates, and (as we are all too apt to do) makes the worst of in three expressions, (1.) That he was the butt to God's arrows: Thou hast set me as a mark against thee, *ver. 20.* My case is singular, and none is shot at so as I am. (2.) That he was a burthen to himself ready to sink under the load of his own life. How much delight soever we take in our selves, God can when he pleaseth make us burthens to our selves. What comfort can we take in our selves, if God appear against us as an enemy, and we have not comfort in him? (3.) That he had no intermission of his griefs, *ver. 19.* How long will it be ere thou cause thy rod to depart from me, or abate the rigour of the correction, at least, for so long as that I may swallow down my spittle? It should seem Job's discontent lay much in his throat, stopped him up, and almost choaked him, so that he could not swallow his spittle: He complains, *chap. xxx. 18.* that it bound him about like the collar of his coat. Lord, (saith he) wilt not thou give me some respite, some breathing time? *chap. ix. 18.*

2. The concern he is in about his sins. The best men have sin to complain of, and the better they are, the more they will complain of it.

1. He ingenuously owns himself guilty before God: *I have sinned.* God had said of him, that he was a perfect and an upright man, yet he saith of himself, *I have sinned:* Those may be upright who yet are not sinless; and those who are sincerely penitent, are accepted through a mediator, as evangelically perfect. Job main-

tained against his friends, that he was not an hypocrite; not a wicked man, and yet owns to his God that he had sinned. If we have been kept from gross acts of sin, it doth not therefore follow that we are innocent: The best must acknowledge before God that they have sinned. His calling God the observer, or preserver, of men, may be looked upon as designed for an aggravation of his sin: Tho' God has had his eye upon me, his eye upon me for good, yet I have sinned against him. When we are in affliction, it is seasonable to confess sin, as the procuring cause of our affliction. Penitent confessions would drown and silence passionate complaints.

2. He seriously enquires how he might make his peace with God. *What shall I do unto thee,* having done so much against thee? Are we convinced that we have sinned, and are we brought to own it? we cannot but conclude, that something must be done to prevent the fatal consequences of it: The matter must not rest as it is, but some course must be taken, to undo what has been ill done. And if we are truly sensible of the danger we have run our selves into, we will be willing to do any thing; to take a pardon upon any terms; and therefore will be *inquisitive what we shall do*, *Mic. vi. 6, 7.* what we shall do to God, not to satisfy the demands of his justice, that is done only by the Mediator, but to qualify our selves for the tokens of his favour, according to the tenor of the gospel-covenant. And in making this enquiry, it is good to eye God as the preserver, or saviour of men, not their destroyer: In our repentance, we must keep up good thoughts of God, as one that delights not in the ruin of his creatures, but would rather they should return and live. Thou art the Saviour of men, be my Saviour, for I cast my self upon thy mercy.

3. He earnestly begs for the forgiveness of his sins, *ver. 21.* The heat of his spirit, as, on the one hand, it made his complaints the more bitter; so, on the other hand, it made his prayers the more lively and importunate; as here, *Why dost thou not pardon my transgression?* Art thou not a God of infinite mercy, that art ready to forgive? Hast not thou wrought repentance in me? Why then dost thou not give me the pardon of my sin, and make me to hear the voice of that joy and gladness? Surely he means more than barely the removing of his outward trouble, and is here in earnest for the return of God's favour, which he complained of the want of, *chap. vi. 4.* Lord, pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I can easily bear my afflictions, *Mat. ix. 2.* *Isa. xxxiii. 24.* When the mercy of God pardons the transgression that is committed by us, the grace of God takes away the iniquity that reigns in us: Wherever God removes the guilt of sin, it breaks the power of sin.

4. To enforce his prayer for pardon, he pleads the prospect he had of dying quickly. *For now shall I sleep in the dust;* death will lay us in the dust, will lay us to sleep there, and perhaps presently, now in a little time. Job had been complaining of restless nights, and that sleep departed from his eyes, *ver. 3, 4, 13, 14.* But those who cannot sleep in a bed of down, will shortly sleep in a bed of dust, and not be scared with dreams, nor toss to and fro. And thou shalt seek me in the morning to shew me favour, but I shall not be, it will be too late then. If my sins be not pardoned while I live, I am lost and undone for ever. Note, The consideration of this, that we must shortly die, and perhaps may die suddenly, should make us all very solicitous to get our sins pardoned, and our iniquity taken away.

## C H A P. VIII.

Job's friends are like Job's messengers; those followed one another close with evil tidings, these with harsh censures: Both unawares served Satan's design, those to drive him from his integrity, these to drive him from the comfort of it. Eliphaz did not reply to what Job had said in answer to him, but left it to Bildad, whom he knew to be of the same mind with himself in this affair. Those are not the wisest of the company, but the weakest rather, who covet to have all the talk. Let others speak in their turn, and let the first keep silence, 1 Cor. xiv. 30, 31. Eliphaz had undertaken to shew, that because Job was sorely afflicted, he was certainly a wicked man; Bildad is much of the same mind, and will conclude Job a wicked man, unless God do speedily appear for his relief. In this chapter he endeavours to convince Job, (1.) That he had spoken too passionately, *ver. 2.* (2.) That he and his children had suffered justly, *ver. 3, 4.* (3.) That if he were a true penitent, God would soon turn his captivity, *ver. 5—7.* (4.) That it was a usual thing for providence to extinguish the joys and hopes of wicked men, as his were extinguished, and therefore they had reason to suspect him for an hypocrite, *ver. 8—19.* (5.) That they should be abundantly confirmed in their suspicion, unless God did speedily appear for his relief, *ver. 20, 22.*

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind. 3. Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? 4. If thy children have sinned



sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression: 5. If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; 6. If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. 7. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.

Here, 1. Bildad reproves Job for what he had said, *ver. 2.* checks his passion, but perhaps (as is too common) with greater passion. We thought Job spoke a great deal of good sense, and much to the purpose, and that he had reason and right on his side, but Bildad, like an eager angry disputant, turns it all off with this, *How long wilt thou speak these things?* taking it for granted, that Eliphaz had said enough to silence him, and that therefore all he said was impertinent. Thus (as Caryl observes) reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes. Mens meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked, as if they were evil-doers. Bildad compares Job's discourse to a *strong wind*: Job had excused himself with this, that *his speeches* were but *as wind*, chap. vi. 26. and therefore they should not make such ado about them; yea, but (saith Bildad) they are as a strong wind, blustering and threatening, boisterous and dangerous, and therefore we are concerned to fence against them.

2. He justifies God in what he had done. This he had no occasion to do at this time, for Job did not condemn God, as he would have it thought he did: And this he might have done, without reflecting upon Job's children, as he doth here. Could not he be an advocate for God, but he must be an accuser of his brethren?

(1.) He is right in general, that *God doth not pervert judgment*, nor ever go contrary to any settled rule of justice, *ver. 2.* Far be it from him that he should, and from us that we should suspect him. He never oppresseth the innocent, nor lays more load on the guilty than they deserve. He is God, the Judge, and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? *Gen. xviii. 25.* If there should be unrighteousness with God, *how should he judge the world?* *Rom. iii. 5, 6.* He is Almighty, Shaddai, All-sufficient: Men pervert justice sometimes for fear of the power of others, but God is Almighty, and stands in awe of none: Sometimes to obtain the favour of others; but God is All-sufficient, and cannot be benefited by the favour of any. It is man's weakness and impotency that he often is unjust, it is God's omnipotence that he cannot be so.

(2.) Yet he is not fair and candid in the application: He takes it for granted, that Job's children (the death of whom was one of the greatest of his afflictions) had been guilty of some notorious wickedness, and that the unhappy circumstances of their death, were sufficient evidence that they were sinners above all the children of the east, *ver. 4.* Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment, and yet it did not therefore follow either that his children were cast-aways, or that they died for some great transgression. It is true that we and our children have sinned against God, and we ought to justify him in all he brings upon us and ours; but extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces, and in our judgment of another's case (unless the contrary appears) we ought to take the more favourable side, as our Saviour directs, *Luke xiii. 2, 4.* Here Bildad missed it.

3. He puts Job in hope, that if he were indeed upright, as he said he was, he should yet see a good issue of his present troubles. *Although thy children have sinned against him, and are cast away in their transgression*, they have died in their own sin, yet if thou be pure and upright thyself, and as an evidence of that wilt now seek unto God, and submit to him, all shall be well yet, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* This may be taken two ways: Either,

1. As designed to prove Job an hypocrite, and a wicked man, tho' not by the greatness, yet by the continuance of his afflictions. When thou wast impoverished, and thy children killed, if thou hadst been pure and upright, and approved thyself so in the trial, God would before now have returned in mercy to thee, and comforted thee according to the time of thine affliction; but because he doth not so, we have reason to conclude thou art not so pure and upright as thou pretendest to be: If thou hadst carried thyself well under the former affliction, thou hadst not been struck with the latter. Herein Bildad was not in the right, for a good man may be afflicted for his trial, not only very sorely, but very long, and yet if for life, in comparison with eternity, it is but for a moment. But since Bildad put it to this issue, God was pleased to join issue with him, and proved his servant Job an honest man, by Bildad's own argument, for soon after he blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Or,

2. As designed to direct and encourage Job, that he might not thus run himself into despair, and give up all for gone; yet there might be hope, if he would take the right course. I am apt to think Bildad here intended to condemn Job, yet would be thought to counsel and comfort him. (1.) He gives him good counsel, yet perhaps not expecting he would take it; the same that Eliphaz had given him, *chap. v. 8.* to seek unto God, and that betimes,

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*i. e.* speedily and seriously, and not to be dilatory and trifling in his return and repentance. He adviseth him not to complain, but to petition, and to make his supplication to the Almighty with humility and faith: And to see that there was (what he feared had hitherto been wanting) sincerity in heart, thou must be pure and upright; and honesty in his house, that must be the habitation of thy righteousness, and not filled with ill-gotten goods; else God will not hear thy prayers, *Psal. lxxvi. 18.* It is only the prayer of the upright, that is the acceptable and prevailing prayer, *Prov. xv. 8.* (2.) He gives him good hopes that he should yet again see good days, yet secretly suspecting he was not qualified to see them: He assures him, that if he would be early in seeking God, God would awake for his relief, would remember him, and return to him, tho' now he seemed to forget him and forsake him. That if his habitation were righteous, it should be prosperous, for honesty is the best policy, and inward piety a sure friend to outward prosperity; when we return to God in a way of duty, we have reason to hope that he will return to us in a way of mercy. Let not Job object that he had so little left to begin the world with again, that it was impossible he should ever prosper as he had done; no, tho' thy beginning should be never so small, a little meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, God's blessing shall multiply that to a great increase. This is God's way of enriching the souls of his people with graces and comforts, not *per saltum*, but *per gradum*: The beginning is small, but the progress is to perfection. Dawning light grows to noon-day; a grain of mustard-seed to a great tree. Let us not therefore despise the day of small things, but hope for the day of great things.

8. For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers. 9. (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow) 10. Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? 11. Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? 12. Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. 13. So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrites hope shall perish: 14. Whose hope shall be cut off; and whose trust shall be a spiders web. 15. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure. 16. He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. 17. His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones. 18. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee. 19. Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow.

Bildad here discourseth very well of the sad catastrophe of hypocrites and evil-doers, and the fatal period of all their hopes and joys. He will not be so bold as to say with Eliphaz, that none that were righteous were ever cut off thus, *chap. iv. 7.* yet he takes it for universally granted, that God, in the course of his providence, doth ordinarily bring wicked men, who seemed pious, and were prosperous, to shame and ruin in this world, and by making their prosperity short, he discovers their piety to be counterfeit: Whether this will certainly prove, that all who are thus ruined, must be concluded to have been hypocrites, he will not say; but rather suspect, and thinks the application is easy.

1. He proves this truth, of the certain destruction of all the hopes and joys of hypocrites, by an appeal to antiquity, and the concurring sentiment and observation of all wise and good men. And an undoubted truth it is, if we take in the other world, that if not in this life, yet in the life to come, hypocrites will be deprived of all their trusts, and all their triumphs; whether Bildad so meant or no, we must so take it.

Let us observe the method of his proof, *ver. 8, 9, 10.*

(1.) He insists not on his own judgment, and that of his companions, *we are but of yesterday, and know nothing*, *ver. 9.* He perceived Job had no opinion of their abilities, he thought they knew little; saith Bildad, we will own that we know nothing, are as ready to confess our ignorance as thou art to condemn it; for we are but as yesterday in comparison, and our days upon earth are short and transient, and hastning away as a shadow. And therefore, (1.) We are not so near the fountain-head of divine revelation (which then, for ought appears, was conveyed by tradition) as the former age was, and therefore we must enquire what they said, and recount what we have been told of their sentiments. Blessed be God, now we have the word of God in writing, and are directed to search that; we need not enquire of the former age, nor prepare ourselves to the search of their fathers, for tho' we ourselves are but of yesterday, the word of God in the scripture is as nigh us as them, *Rom. x. 8.* And it is the more sure word of prophecy, to which we must take heed: If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them *understand more than the ancients*, *Psal. cxix. 99, 100.* (2.) We do not live so long as they of the former age did, to make observations upon the methods of divine



divine providence, and therefore cannot be such competent judges as they, in a cause of this nature. Note, The shortness of our lives is a great hindrance to the improvement of our knowledge, and so is the frailty and weakness of our bodies. *Vita brevis, ars longa.*

(2.) He refers himself to the testimony of the antients, and to the knowledge which Job himself had of their sentiments. Do thou enquire of the former age, and let them tell thee not only their own judgment in this matter, but also of their fathers, ver. 8. *They will teach thee, and inform thee, (ver. 10.)* that all along in their time, the judgments of God followed wicked men: This they will utter of their hearts, *i. e.* as that which they firmly believe themselves, which they are greatly affected with, and desirous to acquaint and affect others with. Note, (1.) For the right understanding of divine providence, and the unfolding of the difficulties of it, it will be of use to compare the observations and experiences of former ages, with the events of our own day; and in order thereunto, to consult history, especially the sacred history, which is the most antient, infallibly true, and written designedly for our learning. (2.) They that would fetch knowledge from the former ages, must search diligently, prepare for the search, and take pains in the search. (3.) Those words are most likely to reach to the hearts of the learners, that come from the hearts of the teachers. They shall teach thee best that utter words out of their heart, that speak by experience, and not by rote, of spiritual and divine things.

The learned bishop Patrick suggests, that Bildad being a Shuhite, descended from Shuah one of Abraham's sons by Keturah, Gen. xxv. 2. In this appeal he makes to history, he has a particular respect to the rewards which then remained of God's blessings upon the posterity of faithful Abraham, who hitherto, and long after, continued in his religion; and of the extirpation of those eastern people (neighbours to Job) in whose country they were settled, for their wickedness: Whence he infers, that it is God's usual way to prosper the just, and root out the wicked, tho' for a while they may flourish.

2. He illustrates this truth by some similitudes.

1. The hopes and joys of the hypocrites are here compared to a rush or flag, ver. 11, 12, 13. (1.) It grows up out of the mire and water. The hypocrite cannot gain his hope without some false rotten ground or other out of which to raise it, and with which to support it and keep it alive, no more than the rush can grow without mire: He grounds it on his worldly prosperity, the plausible profession he makes of religion, the good opinion of his neighbours, and his own good conceit of himself, which are no solid foundation on which to build his confidence. It is all but mire and water, and the hope that grows out of it is but rush and flag. (2.) It may look green and gay for a while; the rush outgrows the grass, but it is light and hollow, and empty, and good for nothing. It is green for show, but of no use. (3.) It withers presently, *before any other herb*, ver. 12. Even while it is in its greenness, it is dried away, and gone in a little time. Note, The best state of hypocrites and evil-doers borders upon withering; even when it is green it is going. The grass is cut down and withered, Psal. xc. 6. But the rush is not cut down, and yet withers, *withers afore it grows up*, Psal. cxxix. 6. as it has no use, so it has no continuance. And, ver. 13. *so are the paths of all that forget God*, they take the same way that the rush doth, *for the hypocrite's hope shall perish*. Note, 1. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of mens hypocrisy, and of the vain hopes with which they flatter and deceive themselves in their hypocrisy. Men would not be hypocrites, if they did not forget that the God with whom they have to do, searcheth the heart, and requires truth there, that he is a spirit, and has his eye on our spirits: And hypocrites could have no hope, if they did not forget that God is righteous, and will not be mocked with the torn and the lame. 2. The hope of hypocrites is a great cheat upon themselves, and tho' it may flourish a while, it will certainly perish at last, and they with it.

2. They are here compared to a spider's web, or a spider's house, as it is in the margin; a cob-web, ver. 14, 15. The hope of the hypocrite (1.) Is woven out of his own bowels, it is the creature of his own fancy, and ariseth purely from a conceit of his own merit and sufficiency. There is a great deal of difference between the work of the bee and that of the spider; a diligent christian, like the laborious bee, fetcheth in all his comfort from the heavenly dews of God's word; but the hypocrite, like the subtle spider, weaves his out of a false hypothesis of his own, concerning God, as if he were altogether such a one as himself. (2.) He is very fond of it, as the spider of her web, pleaseth himself with it, wraps himself in it, calls it his house, *leans upon it*, and *holds it fast*: It is said of the spider, that *she takes hold with her hands, and is in kings palaces*, Prov. xxx. 28. So doth a carnal worldling hug himself in the fulness and firmness of his outward prosperity, prides himself in that house as his palace, and fortifies himself in it as his castle, and makes use of it as the spider of her web, to ensnare those he has a mind to prey upon: So doth a formal professor, he flatters himself in his own eyes, doubts not of his salvation, is secure of heaven, and cheats the world with his vain confidences. (3.) It will easily and certainly be swept away as

the cob-web with the besom, when God shall come to purge his house. The prosperity of worldly people will fail them, when they expect to find safety and happiness in it: They seek to hold fast their estates, but God is plucking them out of their hands, and whose shall those things be which they have provided, or what the better will they be for them? The confidences of hypocrites will fail them, *I tell you I know you not*: The house built on the sand will fall in the storm, when the builder most needed it, and promised himself the benefit of it. *When a wicked man dies, his expectation perisheth*. The ground of his hopes will prove false; he will be disappointed of the thing he hoped for, and his foolish hope with which he buoyed himself up, will be turned into endless despair; and thus his hope will be cut off, his web, that refuge of lies, swept away, and he crushed in it.

3. They are here compared to a flourishing and well-rooted tree, which, tho' it do not wither of itself, yet will easily be cut down, and its place know it no more. The secure and prosperous sinner may think himself wronged when he is compared to a rush and a flag, he thinks he has a better bottom than so, and we will allow him his conceit (saith Bildad) and give him all the advantage he can desire, and yet bring him in suddenly cut off. He is here represented as Nebuchadnezzar was in his own dream, (Dan. iv. 10.) by a great tree.

1. See this tree fair and flourishing, ver. 16. like a green bay-tree, Psal. xxxvii. 35. green before the sun, that keeps its greenness in defiance of the scorching sun-beams, and his branch shooteth forth under the protection of his garden-wall, and with the benefit of his garden soil: see it fixed, and taking deep root, never likely to be overthrown by stormy winds, for his roots are interwoven with the stones, ver. 17. it grows in firm ground, not, as the rush, in mire and water. Thus doth a wicked man, when he prospers in the world, think himself secure; his wealth is a high wall in his own conceit.

2. See this tree felled and forgotten notwithstanding; *destroyed from his place*, ver. 18. and so wholly extirpated, that there shall remain no sign or token where it grew, the very place shall say, *I have not seen thee*, and the standers by shall say the same, *I sought him, but he could not be found*, Psal. xxxvii. 36. He made a great show and a great noise for a time, but he is gone of a sudden, and *neither root nor branch left him*, Mal. iv. 1. *This is the joy (i. e. this is the end and conclusion) of the wicked man's way*, ver. 19. this is that which all his joy comes to, *the way of the ungodly shall perish*, Psal. i. 6. His hope he thought would, in the issue, be turned into joy, but this is the issue, this is the joy, *the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow*, Isa. xvii. 11. This is the best of it, and what then is the worst of it. But shall he not leave a family behind him, to enjoy what he has? No, *out of the earth*, not out of his roots, *shall others grow*, that are nothing akin to him, and shall fill up his place, and rule over that for which he laboured. Others, viz. of the same spirit and disposition, shall grow up in his place, and be as secure as ever he was, not warned by his fall: The way of worldlings is their folly, and yet there is a race of them that *approve their sayings*, Psal. xlix. 13.

20. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers: 21. Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. 22. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame, and the dwelling-place of the wicked shall come to nought.

Bildad here, in the close of his discourse, sums up what he had to say in a few words, setting before Job life and death, the blessing and the curse; assuring him, that as he was, so he should fare, and therefore they might conclude, that as he fared so he was.

1. On the one hand, if he were a perfect upright man, God would not cast him away, ver. 20. Tho' now he seemed forsaken of God, he would yet return to him, and by degrees would turn his mourning into dancing, Psal. xxx. 11. and comforts should flow in upon him so plentifully, that his mouth should be filled with laughing, ver. 21. So affecting should the happy change be, Psal. cxxvi. 2. They that loved him would rejoice with him, but they that hated him, and had triumphed in his fall, would be ashamed of their insolence, when they see him restored to his former prosperity. Now it is true, that *God will not cast away an upright man*, he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away for ever; it is true, that if not in this world, yet in another, the mouth of the righteous shall be filled with rejoicing: Tho' their sun should set under a cloud, yet it shall rise again clear, never more to be clouded; tho' they go mourning to the grave, that shall not hinder their entrance into the joy of their Lord. It is true, that the enemies of the saints will be clothed with shame, when they see them crowned with honour. But it doth not therefore follow, that if Job were not perfectly restored to his former prosperity, he forfeited the character of a perfect man.

2. On the other hand, if he were a wicked man, and an evil doer, God would not help him, but leave him to perish in his present distresses, ver. 20. And his dwelling-place should come to nought, ver. 22. And here also it is true, that *God will not help the evil doers*, they throw themselves out of his protection, and forfeit



feit his favour, he will *not take the ungodly by the hand*, so it is in the margin, will not have fellowship and communion with them, for *what communion between light and darkness?* he will not lend them his hand to pull them out of the miseries, the eternal miseries into which they have plunged themselves; they will then stretch out their hand to him for help, but it is too late, he will *not take them by the hand, between us and you there is a great gulph fixed*. It is true, that *the dwelling-place of the wicked*, sooner or later, *will come to nought*. Those only that *make God their dwelling-place* are safe for ever, *Psal. xc. 1.—xci. 1*. They who make other things their refuge, will be disappointed. Sin brings ruin on persons and families: Yet to argue, (as Bildad, I doubt, flily doth) that because Job's family was sunk, and he himself at present seemed helpless, therefore he certainly was an ungodly wicked man, was neither just nor charitable, as long as there appeared no other evidence of his wickedness and ungodliness. Let us judge nothing before the time, but wait till the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; and the present difficulties of providence be solved to universal and everlasting satisfaction, when the *mystery of God shall be finished*.

## C H A P. IX.

In this and the following chapter, we have Job's answer to Bildad's discourse, wherein he speaks honourably of God, humbly of himself, and feelingly of his troubles; but not one word by way of reflection upon his friends, or their unkindness to him, nor in direct reply to what Bildad had said. He wisely keeps to the merits of the cause, and makes no remarks upon the person that managed it, nor seeks occasion against him. In this chapter we have, (1.) The doctrine of God's justice laid down, ver. 2. (2.) The proof of it, from his wisdom, and power, and sovereign dominion, ver. 3—13. (3.) The application of it, in which, (1.) He condemns himself, as not able to contend with God, neither in law nor battle, ver. 14—21. (2.) He maintains his point, that we cannot judge of mens character by their outward condition, ver. 22—24. (3.) He complains of the greatness of his troubles, the confusion he was in, and the loss he was at what to say or do, ver. 25—35.

1. **T**HEN Job answered and said, 2. I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? 3. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. 4. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? 5. Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger. 6. Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. 7. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not: and sealeth up the stars. 8. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. 9. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. 10. Which doth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number. 11. Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not. 12. Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou? 13. If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.

Bildad began with a rebuke to Job for talking so much, chap. viii. 2. Job makes no answer to that, tho' it had been easy enough to retort it upon himself; but what he next lays down as his principle, that God never perverts judgment, Job agrees with him in, *I know it is so of a truth*, ver. 2. Note, Those we dispute with, we should be ready to own how far we agree with, and not slight, much less resist, a truth, tho' produced by an adversary, and urged against us, but receive it in the light and love of it, tho' it have been misapplied. *It is so of a truth*, that wickedness brings men to ruin, and the godly are taken under God's special protection: These are truths which I subscribe to; but how can any man make good his part with God! *In his sight shall no flesh living be justified*, *Psal. cxliii. 2*. *How should man be just with God?* Some understand this as a passionate complaint of God's strictness and severity, that he is a God there is no dealing with; and it cannot be denied, that there are in this chapter some peevish expressions, which seem to speak such language as that: But I take this rather as a pious confession of man's sinfulness, and his own in particular, that if God should deal with any of us according to the desert of our iniquities, we were certainly undone.

1. He lays this down for a truth, that man is an unequal match for his Maker, either in dispute or combat.

(1.) In dispute, ver. 3. *If he will contend with him*, either at law or at an argument, *he cannot answer him one of a thousand*. (1.) God can ask a thousand puzzling questions, which those that quarrel with him, and arraign his proceedings, cannot give an answer to.

When God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, he asked him a great many questions; *Dost thou know this?* and *canst thou do that?* to none of which Job could give an answer, chap. xxxviii. and xxxix. God can easily manifest the folly of the greatest pretenders to wisdom. (2.) God can lay to our charge a thousand offences, can draw up against us a thousand articles of impeachment, and we cannot answer him so as to acquit our selves from the imputation of any of them, but must, by silence, give consent that they are all true; we cannot set aside one as foreign, another as frivolous, and another as false; we cannot as to one deny the fact, and plead not guilty, and as to another deny the fault, confess and justify; no, we are not able to answer him, but must *lay our hand upon our mouth*, as Job did, chap. xl. 4, 5. and cry, *guilty, guilty*.

(2.) In combat, ver. 4. *Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?* The answer is very easy, you cannot produce any instance, from the beginning of the world to this day, of any daring sinner that has *hardened himself against God*, hath obstinately persisted in rebellion against him, but he found God too hard for him, and paid dear for his folly. They have not prospered, or had peace; they have had no comfort in it, nor success. What did ever any man get by trials of skill, or trials of titles with his Maker? All the opposition given to God, is but setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire, so foolish, so fruitless, so destructive is the attempt, *Isa. xxvii. 4*. *Ezek. xxvii. 14*. *1 Cor. x. 22*. Apostate angels hardened themselves against God, but did not prosper, *2 Pet. ii. 4*. The dragon fights, but is cast out, *Rev. xii. 8*. Wicked men harden themselves against God, dispute his wisdom, disobey his laws, are impenitent for their sins, and incorrigible under their afflictions, they reject the offers of his grace, and resist the strivings of his Spirit, they make nothing of his threatnings, and make head against his interest in the world; but have they prospered? Can they prosper? No, they are but *treasuring up against themselves wrath against the day of wrath*. They that roll this stone, it will return upon them.

2. He proves it, by shewing what a God he is with whom we have to do: *He is wise in heart*, and therefore we cannot answer him at law, he is *mighty in strength*, and therefore we cannot fight it out with him. It is the greatest madness that can be, to think to contend with a God of infinite wisdom and power, who knows every thing, and can do every thing; who can be neither outwitted nor overpowered. The devil promised himself that Job, in the day of his affliction, would curse God, and speak ill of him, but instead of that, he sets himself to honour God, and to speak highly of him. As ill pained as he is, and as much taken up with his own miseries, when he has occasion to mention the wisdom and power of God, he forgets his complaints, dwells with delight, and expatiates with a flood of eloquence upon that noble useful subject.

Evidences of the wisdom and power of God he fetcheth,

1. From the kingdom of nature, in which the God of nature acts with an uncontrollable power, and doth what he pleaseth, for all the orders and all the powers of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him.

(1.) When he pleaseth he alters the course of nature, and turns back its streams, ver. 5, 6, 7. By the common law of nature the mountains are settled, and are therefore called everlasting mountains, the earth is established, and cannot be removed, *Psal. xciii. 1*. and the pillars thereof are immoveably fixed, the sun riseth in its season, and the stars shed their influences on this lower world; but when God pleaseth, he can not only drive out of the common track, but invert the order, and change the law of nature. (1.) Nothing more firm than the mountains; when we speak of removing mountains, we mean that which is impossible, yet the divine power can make them change their seat, he removeth them, and they know not, removes them whether they will or no; he can make them lower their heads, level them, and overturn them in his anger; can spread the mountains as easily as the husbandman spreads the mole-hills, be they never so high, and large, and rocky: Men have much ado to pass them over, but God, when he pleaseth, can pass them off. He made Sinai shake, *Psal. lxxviii. 8*. *The hills skipped*, *Psal. cxiv. 4*. *The everlasting mountains were scattered*, *Hab. iii. 6*. (2.) Nothing more fixed than the earth on its axletree, yet God can, when he pleaseth, shake that out of its place, and heave it off its centre, and make even its pillars to tremble; what seemed to support it, will it self need support, when God gives it a shock. See how much we are indebted to God's patience, God has power enough to shake the earth from under that guilty race of mankind, which makes it groan under the burthen of sin, and so to *shake the wicked out of it*, *Job xxxviii. 13*. yet he continues the earth, and man upon it, and makes it not still, as once, to swallow up the rebels. (3.) Nothing more constant than the rising sun, it never misseth its appointed time, yet God, when he pleaseth, can suspend it: He that at first commanded it to rise, can countermand it. Once the sun was bid to stand, and another time to retreat, to shew that it is still under the check of its great Creator. Thus great is God's power, and how great then is his goodness, which causeth his sun to shine even upon the evil and unthankful, tho' he could withhold it? He that made the stars also, can, if he pleaseth, seal them



them up, and hide them from our eyes. By earthquakes and subterraneous fires, mountains have sometimes been removed, and the earth shaken: in very dark and cloudy days and nights it seems to us as if the sun were forbidden to rise, and the stars were sealed up, *Acts* xxvii. 20. It is sufficient to say that Job here speaks of what God can do, but if we must understand it of what he has done in fact, all these verses may perhaps be applied to Noah's flood, when the earth, even its mountains, were shaken, and the sun and stars were darkened: and the world that now is we believe to be reserved for that fire which will consume the mountains, and melt the earth with its fervent heat, and which will turn the sun into darkness.

(2.) As long as he pleaseth he preserves the settled course and order of nature, and this is a continued creation. He himself alone, by his own power, and without the assistance of any other, (1.) *Spreads out the heavens*, ver. 8. not only did spread them out at first, but still spreads them out, *i. e.* keeps them spread out, for otherwise they would of themselves roll together like a scroll of parchment. (2.) *He treads upon the waves of the sea*, *i. e.* he suppresseth them and keepeth them under, that they return not to deluge the earth, *Psal.* civ. 9. which is given as a reason why we should all fear God, and stand in awe of him, *Fer.* v. 22. He is mightier than the proud waves, *Psal.* xciii. 4. —lxv. 7. (3.) He makes the constellations, three are named for all the rest, ver. 9. Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and in general the chambers of the south: the stars of which these are composed he made at first, and put into that order, and he still makes them, preserves them in being, and guides their motions, he makes them to be what they are to man, and inclines the hearts of men to observe them, which the beasts are not capable of doing. Not only those stars which we see and give names to, but those also in the other hemisphere, about the antartick pole, which never come in our sight, called here the chambers of the south, are under the divine direction and dominion. How wise is he then, and how mighty!

2. Evidences are here fetched from the kingdom of providence, that special providence which is conversant about the affairs of the children of men. Consider what God doth in the government of the world, and you will say he is *wise in heart*, and *mighty in strength*.

1. He doth many things and great, many and great to admiration, ver. 10. Job here saith the same that Eliphaz had said, *chap.* v. 9. and in the original in the very same words, not declining to speak after him, tho' now his antagonist. God is a great God, and doth great things, a wonder-working God; his works of wonder are so many that we cannot number them, and so mysterious that we cannot find them out. O the depth of his counsels!

2. He acts invisibly, and undiscerned. ver. 11. He goes by me in his operations, *and I see him not, I perceive him not*; his way is in the sea, *Psal.* lxxvii. 19. The operations of second causes are commonly obvious to sense, but God doth all about us, and yet *we see him not*, *Acts* xvii. 23. Our finite understandings cannot fathom his counsels, apprehend his motions, or comprehend the measures he takes; we are therefore incompetent judges of God's proceedings, because we know not what he doth, or what he drives at. The *arcana imperii* are things above us, which therefore we must not pretend to expound, or comment upon.

3. He acts with an incontestible sovereignty, ver. 12. He takes away our creature-comforts and confidences, when and as he pleaseth, takes away health, estate, relations, friends, takes away life itself, whatever goes it is he that takes it, by what hand soever it is removed, his hand must be acknowledged in it; the Lord taketh away, and *who can hinder him? who can turn him away?* Marg. *Who shall make him restore?* So some. Who can dissuade him, or alter his counsels? Who can resist him, or oppose his operations? Who can control him or call him to an account for it? What action can be brought against him? or *who will say unto him, what dost thou?* or why dost thou so? *Dan.* iv. 35. God is not obliged to give us a reason of what he doth. The meaning of his proceedings we know not now, it will be time enough to know hereafter, when it will appear that what seemed now to be done by prerogative, was done in infinite wisdom, and for the best.

4. He acts with an irresistible power, which no creature can resist, ver. 13. *If God will not withdraw his anger* (which he can do when he pleaseth, for he is *lord of his anger*, lets it out, or calls it in as he will) *the proud helpers do stoop under him*, *i. e.* he certainly breaks and crusheth those that proudly help one another against him; proud men set themselves against God and his proceedings: in this opposition they join hand in hand. *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together*, to throw off his yoke, to run down his truths, and to persecute his people; *men of Israel, help*, *Acts* xxi. 28. *Psal.* lxxxiii. 8. If one enemy of God's kingdom fall under his judgment, the rest come proudly to help that, and think to deliver that out of his hand: but in vain, unless he pleaseth to withdraw his anger, which he often doth, for it is the day of his patience, the proud helpers stoop under him, and fall with those whom they designed to help. *Who knows the power of God's anger?* They who think they have strength enough to help others, will not be able to help themselves against it.

14. How much less shall I answer him, *and choose out my words to reason with him?* 15. Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, *but* I would make supplication to my judge. 16. If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. 17. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause. 18. He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness. 19. If I *speake* of strength, lo, *he is strong*, and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? 20. If I justify my self, mine own mouth shall condemn me: *if I say, I am perfect*, it shall also prove me perverse. 21. *Though I were perfect*, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.

What Job had said of man's utter inability to contend with God he here applies to himself, and in effect despairs of gaining his favour; which (some think) ariseth from the hard thoughts he had of God, as one that having set himself against him, right or wrong, would be too hard for him; I rather think it ariseth from the sense he had of the imperfection of his own righteousness, and the dark and cloudy apprehensions which at present he had of God's displeasure against him.

1. He dares not dispute with God, ver. 14. *If the proud helpers do stoop under him, how much less shall I*, a poor weak creature, so far from being a helper, that I am very helpless, *how shall I answer him?* What can I say against that which God doth? If I go about to reason with him, he will certainly be too hard for me. If the potter make the clay into a vessel of dishonour, or break in pieces the vessel he has made, shall the clay or the broken vessel reason with him! So absurd is the man that replieth against God, or thinks to talk it out with him. No, let all flesh be silent before him.

2. He dares not insist upon his own justification before God. Tho' he vindicated his own integrity to his friends, and would not yield that he was an hypocrite and a wicked man, as they suggested, yet he would never plead it as his righteousness before God. I will never venture upon the covenant of innocency, nor think to come off by virtue of that.

Job knew so much of God, and knew so much of himself, that he durst not insist upon his own justification before God.

1. He knew so much of God that he durst not stand a trial with him, ver. 15—19. He knew how to make his part good with his friends, and thought himself able to deal with them, but tho' his cause were better than it was, he knew it was to no purpose to debate it with God.

(1.) God knew him better than he knew himself, and therefore, ver. 15. though I were righteous in my own apprehension, and my own heart did not condemn me, yet *God is greater than my heart*, and knows those secret faults and errors of mine which I do not and cannot understand, and is able to charge me with them, and therefore I will not answer. St Paul speaks to the same purpose, *I know nothing by myself*, am not conscious to myself of any reigning wickedness, and yet *I am not hereby justified*, 1 Cor. iv. 4. I dare not put myself upon that issue, lest God charge that upon me which I did not discover in myself. Job will therefore wave that plea, and *make supplication to his Judge*, *i. e.* would cast himself upon God's mercy, and not think to come off by his own merit.

(2.) He had no reason to think that there was any thing in his prayers to recommend them to the divine acceptance, or to fetch in an answer of peace, no worth or worthiness at all to which to ascribe their success, but it must be attributed purely to the grace and compassion of God who answers before we call, and not because we call, and gives gracious answers to our prayers, but not for our prayers, ver. 16. *If I had called and he had answered*, had given the thing I called to him for, yet so weak and defective are my best prayers, that I would not believe he had therein hearkened to my voice, I could not say he had *saved with his right hand, and answered me*, *Psal.* lx. 5. but that he did it purely for his own name's sake. Bishop Patrick expounds it thus; if I had made supplication, and he had granted my desire, I would not think my prayer had done the business. *Not for your sakes be it known to you.*

(3.) His present miseries which God had brought him into, notwithstanding his integrity, gave him too sensible a conviction, that in the ordering and disposing of mens outward condition in this world, God acts by sovereignty, and tho' he never doth wrong to any, yet he doth not ever give full right to all, that is, the best do not always fare best, nor the worst fare worst in this life, because he reserves the full and exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state. Job was not conscious to himself of any extraordinary guilt, and yet fell under extraordinary afflictions, ver. 17, 18. Every man must expect the wind to blow upon him and ruffle him, but Job was broken with a tempest; every man in the midst of these thorns and briars, must expect to be scratched, but Job was wounded, and his wounds multiplied. Every man must expect a cross daily, and to taste sometimes



sometimes of the bitter cup, but poor Job's troubles came so thick upon him, that he had no breathing time, and he was filled with bitterness; and he presumes to say all this was without cause, without any great provocation given. We have made the best of what Job said hitherto, tho' contrary to the judgment of many good interpreters, but here, no doubt, he *spoke unadvisedly with his lips*: he reflected on God's goodness, in saying he was not suffered to take his breath, while yet he had such good use of his reason and speech as to be able to talk thus; and on his justice, in saying it was without cause: and yet it is true, that as, on the one hand, there are many who are chargeable with more sin than the common infirmities of the human nature, and yet feel no more sorrow than that of the common calamities of human life; so, on the other hand, there are many who feel more than the common calamities of human life, and yet are conscious to themselves of no more but the common infirmities of human nature.

(4.) He was in no capacity at all to make his part good with God, *ver. 19.* (1.) Not by force of arms: I dare not enter the lists with the Almighty, for if I speak of strength, and think to come off by that, *lo he is strong*; stronger than I, and will certainly over-power me. There is no disputing (said one once to Cæsar) with him that commands legions, much less with him that has legions of angels at command. Can thine heart endure, thy courage and presence of mind, or can thine hands be strong to defend thy self, *in the days that I shall deal with thee?* Ezek. xxii. 14. (2.) Not by force of arguments, I dare not try the merits of the cause: if I speak of judgment, and insist upon my right, *who will set me a time to plead?* There is no higher power to which I may appeal, no superior court to appoint a hearing of the cause, for he is supreme, and from him every man's judgment proceeds which he must abide by.

2. He knew so much of himself that he durst not stand a trial, *ver. 20, 21.* If I go about to justify my self and to plead a righteousness of my own, my defence will be my offence, and *mine own mouth shall condemn me*, even when it goes about to acquit me. A good man that knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and is jealous over it with a godly jealousy, and hath often discovered that amiss there which had long lain undiscovered, is suspicious of more evil in himself than he is really conscious of, and therefore will by no means think of justifying himself before God. If we say we have no sin we not only deceive ourselves, but we affront God, for we sin in saying so, and give the lie to the scripture, which has concluded all under sin. If I say, I am perfect, I am sinless, God has nothing to lay to my charge, my very saying so shall prove me perverse, proud, ignorant, and presumptuous. Nay, though I were perfect, tho' God should pronounce me just, yet would I not know my soul, I would not be in care about the prolonging of my life, while it is loaded with all these miseries. Or, tho' I were free from gross sin, tho' my conscience do not charge me with any enormous crime, yet would I not believe my own heart so far as to insist upon my innocence, nor think my life worth striving for with God. In short, it is folly to contend with God, and our wisdom as well as duty to submit to him, and throw ourselves at his feet.

22. This is one thing, therefore I said it, he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. 23. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent. 24. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if not, and who is he?

Here Job toucheth briefly upon the main point now in dispute between him and his friends. They maintained that those who are righteous and good always prosper in this world, and none but the wicked are in misery and distress; he asserted on the contrary, that it is a common thing for the wicked to prosper, and the righteous to be greatly afflicted: this is the one thing, the chief thing, wherein he and his friends differed, and they had not proved their assertion, therefore he abides by his: I said it, and say it again, that all things come alike to all.

Now it must be owned,

1. That there is very much truth in what Job here means; that temporal judgments when they are sent abroad fall both upon good and bad, and the destroying angel seldom distinguisheth (tho' once he did) between the houses of Israelites and the houses of Egyptians.

In the judgment of Sodom indeed, which is called *the vengeance of eternal fire*, Jude 7. far be it from God to *slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked*, Gen. xviii. 25. but in judgments merely temporal the righteous have their share, and sometimes the greatest share. The sword devours one as well as another, Josiah as well as Ahab. Thus God *destroys the perfect and the wicked*, involves them both in the same common ruin; good and bad were sent together into Babylon, Jer. xxiv. 5, 9. If the scourge slay suddenly, and sweep down all before it, God will be well pleased to see how the same scourge which is the perdition of the wicked, is the trial of the

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innocent, and of their faith, which will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7. Psal. lxxvi. 10.

*Against the just th' Almighty's arrows fly,  
For he delights the innocent to try;  
To shew their constant and their God-like mind,  
Not by afflictions broken, but refin'd.*

Sir R. Blackmore.

Let this reconcile God's children to their troubles: they are but trials, designed for their honour and benefit, and if God be pleased with them, let not them be displeased: if he laugh at the trial of the innocent, knowing how glorious the issue of it will be, at destruction and famine let them also laugh, Job v. 22. and triumph over them saying, *O death where is thy sting!*

On the other hand, the wicked are so far from being made the marks of God's judgments, that *the earth is given into their hand*, ver. 24. They enjoy large possessions and great power, have what they will, and do what they will. *Into the hand of the wicked one*: in the original it is singular, the devil, that wicked one is called the god of this world, and boasts that *into his hands it is delivered*, Luke iv. 6. Or, *Into the hand of a wicked man*, meaning (as bishop Patrick and the Assemblies annotations conjecture) some noted tyrant then living in those parts, whose great wickedness and great prosperity were well known both to Job and his friends. The wicked have the earth given them, but the righteous have heaven given them; and which is better, heaven without earth, or earth without heaven? God in his providence advanceth wicked men, while he covers the faces of those who are fit to be judges, who are wise and good, and qualified for government, and buries them alive in obscurity; perhaps suffers them to be run down and condemned, and to have their faces covered as criminals by those wicked ones into whose hand the earth is given. We daily see this is done, if it be not God that doth it, where and who is he that doth? To whom can it be ascribed but to him that rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he will? Dan. iv. 32.

2. Yet it must be owned that there is too much passion in what Job here saith. The manner of expression is peevish: when he meant that God afflicts, he ought not to have said he destroys, both the perfect and the wicked: when he meant, that God pleaseth himself with the trial of the innocent, he ought not to have said he laughs at it, for he doth not afflict willingly. When the spirit is heated either with dispute, or with discontent, we have need to set a watch before the door of our lips, that we may observe a good decorum in speaking of divine things.

25. Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. 26. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey. 27. If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort my self: 28. I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent. 29. If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? 30. If I wash my self with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; 31. Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. 32. For *he is not a man, as I am*, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment: 33. Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. 34. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me. 35. Then would I speak, and not fear him; but *it is not so with me*.

Job here grows more and more querulous, and doth not conclude this chapter with such awful expressions of God's wisdom and justice as he began it. They that indulge a complaining humour know not to what indecencies, nay to what impieties, it will hurry them. The beginning of that strife with God is as the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off, before it be meddled with. When we are in trouble, we are allowed to complain to God, as the Psalmist often, but must by no means complain of God, as Job here.

1. His complaint here of the passing away of the days of his prosperity is well enough, *ver. 25, 26.* My days, *i. e.* all my good days are gone, never to return; gone of a sudden, gone ere I was aware: never did any courier that went express, like Cush and Ahimaaz, with good tidings, make such haste as all my comforts did from me; never did ship fail to its port, never did eagle fly upon his prey with such incredible swiftness! nor doth there remain any footsteps of my prosperity no more than there doth of *an eagle in the air, or a ship in the sea*, Prov. xxx. 19. See here, (1.) How swift the motion of time is; it is always upon the wing, hastning to its period; it stays for no man. What little need have we of pastimes, and what great need to redeem time, when time runs out, runs on so fast towards eternity, which comes as time goes? (2.) How vain the enjoyments



ments of time are, which we may be quite deprived of while yet time continues? Our day may be longer than the sun-shine of our prosperity; and when that is gone, it is as if it had not been. The remembrance of having done our duty will be pleasing afterwards, so will not the remembrance of our having got a great deal of worldly wealth, when it is all lost and gone. They flee away past recall, they see no good, and leave none behind them.

2. His complaint of his present uneasiness is excusable. *ver. 27, 28. (1.)* It should seem he did his endeavour to quiet and compose himself as his friends advised him. That was the good he would do: he would fain forget his complaints and praise God, would leave off his heaviness and comfort himself, that he might be fit for converse both with God and man: but, (2.) He found he could not do it; *I am afraid of all my sorrows*; then when I strive most against my trouble, it prevails most over me, and proves too hard for me! It is easier in such a case to know what we should do than to do it; to know what temper we should be in than to get into that temper, and keep in it. It is easy to preach patience to those that are in trouble, and to tell them they must forget their complaints, and comfort themselves, but it is not so soon done as said. Fear and sorrow are tyrannizing things, not easily brought into the subjection they ought to be kept in to religion and right reason.

3. But his complaint of God is implacable, and inexorable was by no means to be excused. It was the language of his corruption. He knew better things, and at another time would have been far from harbouring any such hard thoughts of God as now broke in upon his spirit, and broke out in these passionate complaints. Good men do not always speak like themselves; but God considers their frame, and the strength of their temptations, gives them leave afterwards to unsay it by repentance, and will not lay it to their charge.

Job seems to speak here,

1. As if he despaired of obtaining from God any relief or redress of his grievances, tho' he should produce never so good proofs of his integrity. *I know thou wilt not hold me innocent*, my afflictions have continued so long upon me, and increased so fast, that I do not expect thou wilt ever clear up my innocency by delivering me out of them, and restoring me to a prosperous condition. Right or wrong I must be treated as a wicked man, my friends will continue to think so of me, and God will continue upon me the afflictions which give them occasion to think so, and why then do I labour in vain to clear myself, and maintain my own integrity? *ver. 29.* It is to no purpose to speak in a cause that is already prejudged. With men it is often labour in vain for the most innocent to go about to clear themselves, they must be adjudged guilty, tho' the evidence be never so plain for them: but it is not so in our dealings with God, who is the patron of oppressed innocency, and to whom it was never in vain to commit a righteous cause.

Nay, he not only despairs of relief, but expects that his endeavour to clear himself would render him yet more obnoxious, *ver. 30, 31. If I wash myself with snow-water*, and make my integrity never so evident, it will be all to no purpose, judgment must go against me, *thou shalt plunge me in the ditch*, the pit of destruction, so some, or rather the filthy kennel, or sewer, which will make me stink so in the nostrils of all about me, that my own clothes shall abhor me, and I shall even loath to touch myself. He saw his afflictions coming from God, those were the things that blackened him in the eye of his friends, and upon that score he complained of them, and of the continuance of them, not only as the ruin of his comfort, but as the ruin of his reputation. Yet these words are capable of a good construction. If we be never so industrious to justify ourselves before men, and to preserve our credit with them, if we keep our hands never so clean from the pollutions of gross sin, which fall under the eye of the world; yet God, who knows our hearts, can charge us with so much secret sin as will for ever take off all our pretensions to purity and innocency, and make us see ourselves odious in the sight of the holy God. Paul while a Pharisee made his hands very clean, but when the commandment came and discovered to him his heart-sins, made him know lust, that *plunged him in the ditch*.

2. As if he despaired to have so much as a fair hearing with God, and that were hard indeed.

1. He complains that he was not upon even terms with God, *ver. 32. He is not a man as I am.* I could venture to dispute with a man like my self, the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, but he is infinitely above me, and therefore I dare not enter the lists with him, I shall certainly be cast if I contend with him. Note, (1.) God is not a man as we are. Of the greatest princes we may say, they are men as we are, but not of the great God. His thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and we must not measure him by ourselves. Man is foolish and weak, frail and fickle, but God is neither so nor so. We are depending, dying creatures, he the independent and immortal Creator. (2.) The consideration of this should keep us very low, and very silent before God. Let us not make ourselves equal with God, but always eye him as equally above us.

2. That there was no arbitrator or umpire to adjust the differences between him and God, and to determine the controversy, *ver. 33. Neither is there any days-man.* This complaint that there was not, is in effect a wish that there were, and so the LXX read it. *O that there were a mediator between us!* Job would gladly refer the matter, but no creature was capable of being a referee, and therefore he must even refer it still to God himself, and resolve to acquiesce in his judgment. Our Lord Jesus is the blessed days-man, who has mediated between heaven and earth, has laid his hand upon us both, to him the Father has committed all judgment, and we must: but this matter was not then brought to so clear a light as it is now by the gospel, which leaves no room for such a complaint as this.

3. That the terrors of God, which set themselves in array against him, put him into such confusion that he knew not how to address himself to God with the confidence with which he was formerly wont to approach him, *ver. 34, 35.* Besides the distance which I am kept at by his infinite transcendence, his present dealings with me are very discouraging. *Let him take his rod away from me*; he means not so much his outward afflictions as the load which lay upon his spirit, from the apprehensions of God's wrath, that was his fear which terrified him: let that be removed, let me recover the sight of his mercy, and not be amazed with the sight of nothing but his terrors, and then I would speak, and order my cause before him. But it is not so with me, the cloud doth not at all scatter, the wrath of God still fastens upon me, and preys on my spirits as much as ever; and what to do I know not.

From all this let us take occasion, (1.) To stand in awe of God, and to fear the power of his wrath. If good men have been put into such consternation by it, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* (2.) To pity those that are wounded in spirit, and pray earnestly for them, because in that condition they know not how to pray for themselves. (3.) Carefully to keep up good thoughts of God always in our minds, for hard thoughts of him are the inlets of much mischief. (4.) To bless God that we are not in such a disconsolate condition as poor Job was here in; that walk in the light of the Lord, let us rejoice therein, but *rejoice with trembling*.

## CHAP. X.

Job owns here that he was full of confusion, *ver. 15. and as he was, so was his discourse: he knew not what to say, and perhaps sometimes scarce knew what he said.* In this chapter, (1.) He complains of the hardships he was under, *ver. 1-7.* And then comforts himself with this, that he was in the hand of the God that made him, and pleads that, *ver. 8-13.* (2.) He complains again of the severity of God's dealings with him, *ver. 14-17.* and then comforts himself with this, that death would put an end to his troubles, *ver. 18-22.*

1. **M**Y soul is weary of my life, I will leave my complaint upon my self; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. 3. Is it good unto thee, that thou shouldst oppress? that thou shouldst despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? 4. Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth? 5. Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as mans days, 6. That thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin? 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked, and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand.

Here is, 1. A passionate resolution to persist in his complaint, *ver. 1.* Being daunted with the dread of God's majesty, so that he could not plead his cause with him, he resolves to give himself some ease by giving vent to his resentments. He begins with a hot word, *my soul is weary of my life*, weary of this body, and impatient to get clear of it, fallen out with life, and displeased at it, sick of it, and longing for death: thro' the weakness of grace he went contrary to the dictates even of nature itself. We should act more like men, did we act more like saints: faith and patience would keep us from being weary of our lives, (and cruel to them, as some read it) even then when providence has made them most wearisome to us, for that is to be weary of God's correction. Job being weary of his life, and having ease no other way, resolves to complain, resolves to speak: he will not give vent to his soul by violent hands, but he will give vent to the bitterness of his soul, by violent words. Losers think they may have leave to speak, and unbridled passions as well as unbridled appetites are apt to think it an excuse for their excursions, that they cannot help it: but what have we wisdom and grace for, but to keep the mouth as with a bridle? Job's corruption speaks here, yet grace puts in a word: (1.) He will complain, but



but he will leave his complaint upon himself: he would not impeach God, nor charge him with unrighteousness or unkindness, but tho' he knew not particularly the ground of God's controversy with him, and the cause of action; yet in the general he would suppose it to be in himself, and willingly bear all the blame. (2.) He will speak, but it shall be the *bitterness of his soul* that he will express, not his settled judgment. If I speak amiss, it is *not I but sin that dwells in me*, not my soul, but its *bitterness*.

2. A humble petition to God. He will speak, but the first word shall be a prayer, and as I am willing to understand it, it is a good prayer, *ver. 2.* (1.) That he might be delivered from the sting of his afflictions, which is sin: do not condemn me, do not separate me for ever from thee. Tho' I lie under the cross, let me not lie under the curse: tho' I smart by the rod of a father, let me not be cut off by the sword of a judge. Thou dost correct me, I will bear that as well as I can, but oh do not condemn me! It is the comfort of those who are in Christ Jesus, that tho' they are in affliction there is *no condemnation* to them, *Rom. viii. 1.* Nay, they are *chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world*, *1 Cor. xi. 32.* This therefore we should deprecate above any thing else when we are in affliction, however thou art pleased to deal with me, Lord, do not condemn me; my friends condemn me, but do not thou. (2.) That he might be acquainted with the true cause of his afflictions, and that is sin too: Lord, *shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* When God afflicts us he contends with us, when he contends with us there is always a reason why and wherefore. He is never angry without a cause, tho' we are; and it is desirable to know what the reason is, that we may repent of, mortify and forsake the sin for which God hath a controversy with us: in enquiring it out let conscience have leave to do its office, and to deal faithfully with us, as *Gen. xlii. 21.*

3. A peevish expostulation with God concerning his dealings with him. Now he speaks in the bitterness of his soul indeed, not without some ill-natured reflections upon the righteousness of his God.

1. He thinks it unbecoming the goodness of God, and the mercifulness of his nature, to deal so hardly with his creature, as to lay upon him more than he could bear, *ver. 3.* *Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress?* No, certainly it is not; what he approves not in men, *Lam. iii. 34, 35, 36.* he will not act himself. Lord, in dealing with me thou seemest to oppress thy subject, to despise thy workmanship, and to countenance thine enemies. Now, Lord, what is the meaning of this? Such is thy nature that this cannot be a pleasure to thee; and such is thy name that it cannot be an honour to thee; why then dealest thou thus with me? *What profit is there in my blood?* Far be it from Job to think that God did him wrong, but he is quite at a loss how to reconcile his providences with his justice, as good men have often been, and must wait until the day shall declare it. Let us therefore now harbour no hard thoughts of God, because we shall then see there was no cause for them.

2. He thinks it unbecoming the infinite knowledge of God to put his prisoner thus upon the rack, as it were by torture, to extort a confession from him, *ver. 4, 5, 6.*

(1.) He is sure God doth not discover things, nor judge of them as men do: he *has not eyes of flesh*, *ver. 4.* for he is a spirit. Eyes of flesh cannot see in the dark, but darkness hideth not from God: eyes of flesh are but in one place at a time, and can see but a little way, but the *eyes of the Lord are in every place, and run to and fro through the whole earth.* Many things are hid from eyes of flesh, the most curious and piercing. *There is a path which even the vulture's eye hath not seen:* but nothing is or can be hid from the eye of God, to which all things are naked and open. Eyes of flesh see the outward appearance only, and may be imposed upon by a *deceptio visus*, but God sees every thing truly, his sight cannot be deceived, for he trieth the heart, and is a witness to the thoughts and intents of that. Eyes of flesh discover things gradually, and when we gain the sight of one thing we lose the sight of another, but God sees every thing at one view. Eyes of flesh are soon tired, must be closed every night that they may be refreshed, and will shortly be darkened by age, and shut up by death, but the keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor doth his sight ever decay. *God sees not as man sees*, i.e. he doth not judge as man judgeth, at the best *secundum allegata & probata*, as the thing appears, rather than as it is, and too often according to the bias of the affections, passions, prejudices, and interest; but *we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth*, and that truth he knows not by information, but by his own inspection. Men discover secret things by search, and examination of witnesses, comparing evidence and giving conjectures upon it, wheedling or forcing the parties concerned to confessions. But God needs not any of these ways of discovery, *he sees not as men see.*

(2.) He is sure that as God is not short-sighted like man, so he is not short lived, *ver. 5.* *Are thy days as the days of man, few and evil?* Do they roll on in succession, or are they subject to change like the days of man? No, by no means. Men grow wiser by experience, and more knowing by daily observation,

with them truth is the daughter of time, and therefore they must take time for their searches, and if one experiment fail, must try another, but it is not so with God; to him nothing is past, nothing future, but every thing present. The days of time, by which the life of man is measured, are nothing to the years of eternity in which the life of God is wrapt up.

(3.) He therefore thinks it strange that God should thus prolong his torture, and continue him under the confinement of this affliction, and neither bring him to a trial, nor grant him a release: As if he must take time to *enquire after his iniquity*, and use means to *search after his sin*, *ver. 6.* Not as if Job thought God did thus torment him that he might find occasion against him, but his dealings with him had such an aspect which was dishonourable to God, and would tempt men to think him a hard master: Now, Lord, if thou wilt not consult my comfort, consult thine own honour; do something *for thy great name*, and *do not disgrace the throne of thy glory*, *Jer. xiv. 21.*

3. He thinks it looked like an abuse of his omnipotence, to keep a poor prisoner in custody, whom he knew to be innocent, only because there was *none that could deliver him out of his hand*, *ver. 7.* *Thou knowest that I am not wicked.* He had already owned himself a sinner, and guilty before God, but he here stands to it, that he was not wicked, not devoted to sin, not an enemy to God, not a dissembler in his religion, that he *had not wickedly departed from his God*, *Psal. xviii. 21.* *But there is none that can deliver out of thy hand*, and therefore there is no remedy, I must be content to lie by it, waiting thy time, and throwing my self on thy mercy, in submission to thy sovereign will. Here see (1.) What ought to quiet us under our troubles; that it is to no purpose to contend with omnipotence. (2.) What will abundantly comfort us, if we are able to appeal to God, as Job here, Lord, *thou knowest that I am not wicked.* I cannot say that I am not wanting, or I am not weak; but, through grace, I can say *I am not wicked:* Thou knowest I am not, for *thou knowest I love thee.*

8. Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. 9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay, and wilt thou bring me into dust again? 10. Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and cruddled me like cheese? 11. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. 12. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. 13. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee.

In these verses we may observe,

1. How Job eyes God as his creator and preserver, and describes his dependence upon him as the author and upholder of his being. This is one of the first things we are all concerned to know and consider.

(1.) That God made us. He, and not our parents, who were only the instruments of his power and providence in our production. *He made us and not we our selves. His hands have made and fashioned these bodies of ours*, and every part of them, *ver. 8.* and they are *fearfully and wonderfully made:* The soul also which animates the body is his gift. He takes notice of both here. (1.) The body is *made as the clay*, *ver. 9.* cast into shape, into this shape, as the clay is formed into a vessel, according to the skill and will of the potter. We are earthen vessels; mean in our original, and soon broken in pieces; *made as the clay, let not therefore the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?* We must not be proud of our bodies, because the matter is from the earth, yet not dishonour our bodies, because the mould and shape is from the divine wisdom. The formation of human bodies in the womb, is described by an elegant similitude, *ver. 10.* *Thou hast poured me out like milk*, which is coagulated into cheese: and by an induction of some particulars, *ver. 11.* Tho' we come into the world naked, yet the body is it self both clothed and armed; the skin and flesh are its clothing; the bones and sinews are its armour, not offensive, but defensive. The vital parts, the heart and lungs, are thus clothed, not to be seen, thus fenced, not to be hurt. The admirable structure of human bodies, is an illustrious instance of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. What pity is it that these bodies should be instruments of unrighteousness, which are capable of being temples of the Holy Ghost! (2.) The soul is the life, the soul is the man, and this is the gift of God, *thou hast granted me life*, breathed into me the breath of life, without which the body would be but a worthless carcase. God is the father of spirits, he made us living souls, and endued us with the powers of reason. Gave us life and favour, and life is a favour, a great favour, more than meat, more than raiment; a distinguishing favour, a favour that puts us into a capacity of receiving other favours. Now Job was in a better mind than he was when he quarrelled with life as a burthen, and asked *why died I not from the womb?* Or by life and favour may be meant life and all the comforts of life, referring to his former prosperity. Time was when he walked in the light of the divine favour,



vour, and thought, as David, that through that favour his mountain stood strong.

(2.) That God maintains us: Having lighted the lamp of life, he doth not leave it to burn upon its own stock, but continually supplies it with fresh oil; *thy visitation has preserved my spirit*, kept me alive, protected me from the adversaries of life, the death we are in the midst of, and the dangers we are continually exposed to; and blessed me with all the necessary supports of life, and the daily supplies it needs and craves.

2. How he pleads this with God, and what use he makes of it. He minds God of it, *ver. 9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me*; What then?

1. Thou hast made me, and therefore thou hast a perfect knowledge of me, *Psal. cxxxix. 1—13.* and needest not to examine me by scourging, nor to put me upon the rack for the discovering of what is within me.

2. Thou hast made me as the clay by an act of sovereignty, and wilt thou by a like act of sovereignty unmake me again? If so, I must submit.

3. Wilt thou destroy the work of thine own hands! It is a plea the saints have often used in prayer: *We are the clay, and thou our potter*, *Isa. lxiv. 8. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me*, *Psal. cxix. 73.* So here, *thou madest me*, and wilt thou destroy me? *ver. 8. Wilt thou bring me into dust again?* *ver. 9. Wilt thou not pity me? Wilt thou not spare and help me, and stand by the work of thine own hands?* *Psal. cxxxviii. 8.* Thou madest me and knowest my strength, wilt thou then suffer me to be pressed above measure? Was I made to be made miserable? Was I preserved only to be reserved for these calamities? If we plead this with our selves as an inducement to duty, God made me and maintains me, and therefore I will serve him and submit to him, we may plead it with God as an argument for mercy, *Thou hast made me, new make me: I am thine, save me.* Job knew not how to reconcile God's former favours and his present frowns, but concludes, *ver. 13. These things hast thou hid in thine heart*: Both are according to the counsel of thine own will, and therefore undoubtedly consistent however they seem. When God thus strangely changeth his way, tho' we cannot account for it, we are bound to believe there are good reasons for it hid in his heart, which will be manifested shortly: It is not with us, or in our reach to assign the cause, but *I know that this is with thee.* Known unto God are all his works.

14. If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. 15. If I be wicked, wo unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head: I am full of confusion, therefore see thou mine affliction. 16. For it increaseth: thou huntest me as a fierce lion; and again thou shewest thy self marvellous upon me. 17. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increaseth thine indignation upon me: changes and war are against me. 18. Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! 19. I should have been as though I had not been, I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. 20. Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little: 21. Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death; 22. A land of darkness, as darkness it self, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

Here is, 1. Job's passionate complaints: On that harsh and unpleasant string he harps much, in which, tho' he cannot be justified, he may be excused: He complained not for nothing as the murmuring Israelites, but had cause to complain: If we think it looks ill in him, let it be a warning to us to keep our temper better.

(1.) He complains of the strictness of God's judgment, and the rigour of his proceedings against him, and is ready to call it *Summum jus*. (1.) That he took all advantages against him. *If I sin, then thou markest me*, *ver. 14.* If I do but take one false step, misplace a word, or cast a look awry, I shall be sure to hear of it, conscience, thy deputy, will be sure to upbraid me with it, and to tell me this gripe, this twitch of pain, is to punish me for that. If God should thus mark iniquities we are undone, we must say the contrary, tho' we sin, God doth not deal in extremity with us.

(2.) That he prosecuted those advantages to the utmost: *Thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity*: While his troubles continued, he could not take the comfort of his pardon, nor hear that voice of Joy and gladness, so hard is it to see love in God's heart, when we see frowns in his face, and a rod in his hand. (3.) That whatever was his character, his case at present was very uncomfortable, *ver. 15.* (1.) If he be wicked, he is certainly undone in the other world: *If I be wicked, wo to me.* Note, A sinful state is a woful state. This we should each of us believe, as Job here,

with application to our selves, *if I be wicked, tho' prosperous, and living in pleasure, yet wo to me.* Some especially have reason to dread double woes if they be wicked: I that have knowledge, that have made great profession of religion, that have been so often under strong convictions, and have made so many fair promises, I that was born of so good parents, blessed with a good education, that have lived in good families, and long enjoyed the means of grace, *If I be wicked, wo, and a thousand woes to me.* (2.) If he be righteous, yet he dares not lift up his head; dares not answer as before, *chap. ix. 15.* He is so oppressed and overwhelmed with his troubles, that he cannot look up with any comfort or confidence. Without were fightings, within were fears, so that between both he was full of confusion. Not only confusion of face for the disgrace he was brought down to, and the censures of his friends, but confusion of spirit, his mind was in a constant hurry, and he was almost distracted, *Psal. lxxxviii. 15.*

(2.) He complains of the severity of the execution. God (he thought) did not only punish him for every failure, but punish him in a high degree, *ver. 16, 17.* His affliction was (1.) Grievous, very grievous, marvellous, exceeding marvellous. God hunted him as a lion, as a fierce lion hunts and runs down his prey. God was not only strange to him, but shewed himself marvellous upon him, by bringing him into uncommon troubles, and so making him a prodigy, a wonder unto many: All admired that God would afflict, and that Job could bear so much. That which made his afflictions most grievous was, that he felt God's indignation in them, that was it that made them taste so bitter, and lie so heavy: They were God's witnesses against him, tokens of his displeasure, this made the sores of his body wounds in his spirit. (2.) It was growing, still growing worse and worse. This he insists much upon; when he hoped the tide would turn, and begin to ebb, still it flowed higher and higher! His affliction increased, and God's indignation in the affliction; he found himself no better, no way better; these witnesses were renewed against him, that if one did not reach to convict him, another might. Changes and war were against him: If there were any change with him, it was not for the better, still he was kept in a state of war. As long as we are here in this world, we must expect that the clouds will return after the rain, and perhaps the forest and sharpest trials may be reserved for the last. God was at war with him, and it was a great change: He did not use to be so, which aggravated the trouble, and made it truly marvellous. God uses to shew himself kind to his people, if at any time he shews himself otherwise, it is his strange work, his strange act, and he doth in it shew himself marvellous.

(3.) He complains of his life, and that ever he was born to all this trouble and misery, *ver. 18, 19.* If this was designed for my lot, why was I brought out of the womb, and not smothered there, or stifled in the birth? This was the language of his passion, and it was a relapse into the same sin he fell into before. He had just now called life a favour, *ver. 12.* yet now he counts it a burthen, and quarrels with God for giving it, or rather laying it upon him. Mr Caryl gives this a good turn in favour of Job: We may charitably suppose (saith he) that that which troubled Job was, that he was in a condition of life which (as he conceived) hindered the main end of his life, which was the glorifying God: His harp was hung on the willow trees, and he was quite out of tune for praising God: Nay, he feared lest his troubles should reflect dishonour upon God, and give occasion to his enemies to blaspheme; and therefore he wisheth, *O that I had given up the ghost!* A godly man reckons that he lives to no purpose, if he do not live to the praise and glory of God. But if that had been his meaning, it was grounded on a mistake, for we may glorify the Lord in the fire. But this use we may make of it, not to be over-fond of life, since the case hath been such sometimes even with wise and good men that they have complained of it. Why should we dread giving up the ghost, or covet to be seen of men, since the time may come when we may be ready to wish we had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen us? Why should we inordinately lament the death of our children in their infancy, that are as if they had not been, and are carried from the womb to the grave, when perhaps we ourselves may sometimes wish it had been our own lot?

2. Job's humble requests. He prays,

1. That God would see his affliction, *ver. 15.* take cognizance of his case, and take it into his compassionate consideration. Thus David prays, *Psal. xxv. 18. Look upon mine affliction and my pain.* Thus we should in our troubles refer our selves to God, and may comfort our selves with this, that he knows our souls in adversity.

2. That God would grant him some ease. If he could not prevail for the removal of his troubles, yet might he not have some intermission; Lord, let me not be always upon the rack, always in extremity, *O let me alone, that I may take comfort a little!* *ver. 20.* Grant me some respite, some breathing time, some little enjoyment of my self. This he would reckon a great favour: Those that are not duly thankful for constant ease, should think how welcome one hour's ease would be, if they were in constant pain. Two things he pleads,

1. That life and its light were very short. *Are not my days few?* *ver. 20.* Yes, certainly they are, very few: Lord, let them not be all miserable, all in the extremity of misery. I have but



but a little time to live, let me have some comfort of life while it doth last. This plea fastens on the goodness of God's nature, the consideration of which is very comfortable to an afflicted spirit. And if we would use this as a plea with God for mercy, *Are not my days few?* Lord pity me; we should use it as a plea with our selves to quicken us to duty. *Are not my days few?* then it concerns me to redeem time, to improve opportunities, what my hand finds to do, to do it with all my might, that I may be ready for the days of eternity, which shall be many.

2. That death and its darkness were very near, and would be very long, *ver. 21, 22.* Lord, give me some ease before I die, *i. e.* lest I die of my pain. Thus David pleads, *Psal. xiii. 3. Lest I sleep the sleep of death,* and then it will be too late to expect relief, *for wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* *Psal. lxxxviii. 10.* Let me have a little comfort before I die, that I may calmly take leave of this world, and not in such confusion as I am now in. Thus earnest should we be for grace, and thus should we plead, Lord, renew me in the inward man, Lord, sanctify me before I die, for then it will never be done.

See how he speaks here of the state of the dead.

1. It is a fixed state, whence we shall not return ever again to live such a life as we now live, *chap. vii. 10.* At death we must bid a final farewell to this world: The body must then be laid where it will lie long, and the soul determined to that state in which it must be for ever. That had need be well done, which is to be done but once, and done for eternity.

2. It is a very melancholy state; so it appears to us. Holy souls at death remove to a land of light, where there is no death; but their bodies they leave to a land of darkness, and the shadow of death. He heaps up expressions here to the same purpose, to shew that he has as dreadful apprehensions of death and the grave as other men naturally have, so that it was only the extreme misery he was in that made him wish for it. Come and let us look a little into the grave, and we shall find (1.) That there is no order there, it is without any order; perpetual night, and no succession of day: All there lie on the same level, and there is no distinction between prince and peasant, but *the servant is there free from his master,* *chap. iii. 19.* No order is observed in bringing people to the grave, not the eldest first, not the richest, not the poorest, and yet every one in his own order, the order appointed by the God of life. (2.) That there is no light there: In the grave there is thick darkness, darkness that cannot be felt indeed, yet cannot but be feared by those that enjoy the light of life. In the grave there is no knowledge, no comfort, no joy, no praising God, no working out our salvation, and therefore no light. Job was so much ashamed others should see his sores, and so much afraid to see them himself, that the darkness of the grave which would hide them and huddle them up, would upon that account be welcome to him. Darkness comes upon us, and therefore let us walk and work while we have the light with us. The grave being a land of darkness, it is well we are carried thither with our eyes closed, and then it is all one. The grave is a land of darkness to man; our friends that are gone thither we reckon removed into darkness, *Psal. lxxxviii. 18.* But that it is not so to God, will appear by this, that the dust of the bodies of the saints, tho' scattered, tho' mingled with other dust, will none of it be lost, for God's eye is upon every grain of it, and it shall be forth-coming in the great day.

### C H A P. XI.

Poor Job's wounds were yet bleeding, his sore still runs and ceaseth not, but none of his friends bring him any oil, any balm; Zophar the third, pours into them as much vinegar as the two former had done. (1.) He exhibits a very high charge against Job, as proud and false in justifying himself, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) He appeals to God for his conviction, and begs that God would take him to task, *ver. 5.* and that Job might be made sensible, (1.) Of God's unerring wisdom, and his inviolable justice, *ver. 6.* (2.) Of his unsearchable perfections, *ver. 7—9.* (3.) Of his uncontested sovereignty, and uncontrollable power, *ver. 10.* (4.) Of the cognizance he takes of the children of men, *ver. 11, 12.* (5.) He assures him that upon his repentance and reformation, *ver. 13, 14.* God would restore him to his former prosperity and safety, *ver. 15—19.* But if he were wicked it was in vain to expect it, *ver. 20.*

1. **T**HEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, 2. Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? 3. Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? 4. For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. 5. But, O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; 6. And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! know therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.

No. xxxv.

It is sad to see what intemperate passions even wise and good men are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of disputation; of which Zophar here is an instance. Eliphaz began with a very modest preface, *chap. iv. 2.* Bildad was a little more rough upon Job, *chap. viii. 2.* But Zophar falls upon him without mercy, and gives him very ill language; *should a man full of talk be justified?* and *should thy lies make men hold their peace?* Is this the way to comfort Job? No, nor to convince him neither: doth this become one that appears as an advocate for God and his justice? *Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?* They that engage in controversy will find it very hard to keep their temper. All the wisdom, caution and resolution they have will be little enough to prevent their breaking out into such indecencies as here we find Zophar guilty of.

1. He represents Job otherwise than what he was, *ver. 2, 3.* would have him thought idle and impertinent in his discourse, and one that loved to hear himself talk; gives him the lye, and calls him a mocker, and all this that it might be looked upon as a piece of justice to chastise him. Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, find it necessary to put the worst colours they can upon them and their performances, and right or wrong to make them odious. We have read and considered Job's discourses in the foregoing chapters, and have found them full of good sense, and much to the purpose; that his principles are right, his reasonings strong, and many of his expressions weighty and very considerable, and what there is in them of heat and passion, a little candour and charity will excuse and overlook; and yet Zophar here invidiously represents him,

(1.) As a man that never considered what he said, but uttered what came uppermost, only to make a noise with the multitude of words, hoping by that means to carry his cause, and run down his reprovers. *Should not the multitude of words be answered?* Truly, sometimes it is no great matter whether it be or no; silence perhaps is the best confutation of impertinence, and puts the greatest contempt upon it. *Answer not a fool according to his folly.* But if it be answered, let reason and grace have the answering of it, not pride and passion. *Should a man full of talk* (Marg. a man of lips, that is all tongue, *vox & præterea nihil*) *be justified?* Should he be justified in his loquacity, as in effect he is, if he be not reprov'd for it? No, for *in multitude of words their wanteth not sin.* Should he be justified by it? Shall many words pass for valid pleas? Shall he carry the day with the flourish of language? No, he shall not be accepted with God, or any wise men *for his much speaking,* *Mat. vi. 7.*

(2.) As a man that made no conscience of what he said, a liar, and one that hoped by the impudence of lies to silence his adversaries. *Should thy lies make men hold their peace?* A mocker, one that bantered all mankind, and knew how to put false colours upon any thing, and was not ashamed to impose upon every one that talked with him. *When thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?* Is it not time to speak, to stem such a violent tide as this? Job was not mad, but spoke the words of truth and soberness, and yet is thus misrepresented. Eliphaz and Bildad had answered him, and said what they could to make him ashamed, it was therefore no instance of Zophar's generosity to set upon one so violently who was already thus baited; three to one was great odds.

2. He chargeth Job with saying that which he had not said, *ver. 4.* *Thou hast said my doctrine is pure.* And what if he had said so? It was true that Job was found in the faith, and orthodox in his judgment, and spoke better of God than his friends did: if he had expressed himself unwarily, yet it did not therefore follow but that his doctrine was true; but he chargeth him with saying, *I am clean in thine eyes.* Job had not said so: he had indeed said, *thou knowest that I am not wicked,* *chap. x. 7.* but he had said also, *I have sinned,* and never pretended to a spotless perfection. He had indeed maintained that he was not an hypocrite as they charged him, but from thence to infer, that he would not own himself a sinner, was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions of our brethren, that they will bear, but contenders are tempted to put the worst.

3. He appeals to God, and wisheth him to appear against Job. So very confident is he that Job is in the wrong, that nothing will serve him but that God must presently appear to silence and condemn him. We are commonly ready with too much assurance to interest God in our quarrels; and to conclude, that if he would but speak he would take our part, and speak for us; as Zophar here, *O that God would speak,* for he would certainly open his lips against thee, whereas when God did speak, he opened his lips for Job against his three friends. We ought indeed to leave all controversies to be determined by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth, but they are not always in the right that are most forward to appeal to that judgment, and pre-judge it against their antagonists.

Zophar despairs to convince Job himself, and therefore desires God would convince him of two things, which it is good for every one of us duly to consider, and under all our afflictions cheerfully to confess,



1. The unsearchable depth of God's counsels. Zophar cannot pretend to do it, but he desires that God himself would shew Job so much of the secrets of the divine wisdom, as might convince him that they are at least double to that which is, *ver. 6.* Note, (1.) There are secrets in the divine wisdom: *arcana imperii.* God's way is in the sea; clouds and darkness are round about him; he has reasons of state which we cannot fathom, and must not pry into. (2.) What we know of God is nothing to what we cannot know. What is hid is more than double to what appears to us to be, *Eph. iii. 9.* (3.) It will help very much to silence us under the afflicting hand of God, to adore the depth of those divine counsels which we cannot find the bottom of. (4.) God knows a great deal more evil by us than we do by ourselves; so some understand it. When God gave David a fight and sense of sin, he saith that he had *in the hidden part made him to know wisdom*, *Psal. li. 6.*

2. The unexceptionable justice of his proceedings: know therefore that how fore soever the correction is that thou art under, *God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserves:* or, as some read it, he *remits thee part of thine iniquity*, and doth not deal with thee according to the full demerit of it. Note, 1. When the debt of duty is not paid, it is justice to insist upon the debt of punishment. 2. Whatever punishment is afflicted upon us in this world, we must own that is less than our iniquities deserve, and therefore instead of complaining of our troubles, we must be thankful that we are out of hell, *Lam. iii. 39. Psal. ciii. 10.*

7. Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? 8. *It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?* 9. The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. 10. If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him? 11. For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it? 12. For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild asses colt.

Zophar here speaks very good things concerning God, and his greatness and glory, concerning man and his vanity and folly: these two compared together, and duly considered, will have a mighty influence upon our submission to the divine providence in all the disposals of it.

1. See here what God is, and let him be adored.

(1.) He is an incomprehensible being, infinite and immense, whose nature and perfections our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conceptions of, and whose counsels and actions we cannot therefore, without the greatest presumption, pass a judgment upon. We that are so little acquainted with the divine nature are incompetent judges of the divine providence, and when we censure the dispensations of it, we talk of things that we do not understand. We cannot find God, how dare we then find fault with him? Zophar here shews,

(1.) That God's nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our understandings. *Canst thou find out God? find him out to perfection?* No, *What canst thou do? What canst thou know?* *ver. 7, 8.* Thou, a poor, weak, short-sighted creature, a worm of the earth, that art but of yesterday? Thou, tho' never so inquisitive after him, never so desirous and industrious to find him out, yet dar'st thou attempt the search, or canst thou hope to speed in it? We may by searching find God, *Acts xvii. 27.* but we cannot find him out in any thing he is pleased to conceal: we may apprehend him, but cannot comprehend him: may know that he is, but cannot know what he is: the eye can see the ocean, but not see over it: we may, by a humble, diligent and believing search, find out something of God, but cannot find him out to perfection, may know, but cannot know fully what God is, nor find out his work *from the beginning to the end*, *Eccl. iii. 11.* Note, God is unsearchable. The ages of his eternity cannot be numbred, nor the spaces of his immensity measured: the depths of his wisdom cannot be fathomed, nor the reaches of his power bounded: the brightness of his glory can never be described, nor the treasures of his goodness inventoried. This is a good reason why we should always speak of God with humility and caution, and never prescribe to him, or quarrel with him: why we should be thankful for what he has revealed of himself, and long to be there where we shall see him as he is, *1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.*

(2.) That it infinitely exceeds the limits of the whole creation. It is higher than heaven, so some read it, deeper than hell, the great abyss, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, many parts of which are to this day undiscovered, and more were then. It is quite out of our reach to comprehend God's nature, *such knowledge is too wonderful for us*, *Psal. cxxxix. 6.* We cannot fathom God's designs, nor find out the reasons of his proceedings: his judgments are a great deep. St Paul attributes such unmeasurable dimensions to the divine love, as Zophar here attributes to the divine wisdom, and yet recommends it to our acquaintance, *Eph. iii. 18. That ye may know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ.*

(2.) God is a sovereign lord, *ver. 10.* If he cut off by death, (Marg. If he make a change, for death is a change: if he make a change in nations, in families, in the posture of our affairs) if he shut up in prison, or in the net of affliction, *Psal. lxxvi. 11.* If he seize any creature as a hunter doth his prey, he will gather it; so bishop Patrick, and who shall force him to restore? Or, if he gather together, as tares for the fire, or, *if he gather to himself man's spirit and breath*, (*Job xxxiv. 14.*) *then who can hinder him?* Who can either arrest the sentence, or oppose the execution? Who can control his power, or arraign his wisdom and justice? If he that made all out of nothing think fit to reduce all to nothing, or to their first chaos again, if he that separated between light and darkness, dry land and sea at first, please to gather them together again, if he that made unmake, *who can turn him away?* alter his mind, or stay his hand, impede or impeach his proceedings?

(3.) God is a strict and just observer of the children of men, *ver. 11. He knows vain men.* We know little of him, but he knows us perfectly: he sees wickedness also, not to approve it, *Hab. i. 13.* but to animadvert upon men. (1.) He observes vain men, such all are, *every man at his best estate is altogether vanity*; and he considers it in his dealings with them. He knows what the projects and hopes of vain men are, and can blast and defeat them, the workings of their foolish fancies; and sits in heaven and laughs at them. He takes knowledge of the vanity of men, *i. e.* their little sins: so some; their vain thoughts, and vain words, and unsteadiness in that which is good. (2.) He observes ill men: he sees gross wickedness also, tho' acted never so secretly, and never so artfully palliated and disguised. All the wickedness of the wicked is naked and open before the all-seeing eye of God; *will he not then consider it?* Yes, certainly he will, and will reckon for it, tho' for a time he seems to keep silence.

2. See here what man is, and let him be humbled, *ver. 12.* God sees this concerning vain man, that he would be wise, would be thought so, tho' he is *born like a wild asses colt*, so foolish and foolish, unteachable and untameable: see what man is. (1.) He is a vain creature; empty; so the word is: God made him full, but he emptied himself, impoverished himself, and now he is *raca*, a creature that has nothing in him. (2.) He is a foolish creature, become *like the beasts that perish*, *Psal. xlix. 20.* —*lxxiii. 22.* an idiot, born like an ass, the most stupid animal, an ass's colt, not yet brought to any service: if ever he come to be good for any thing it is owing to the grace of Christ, who once in the day of his triumph served himself of an ass's colt. (3.) He is a wilful ungovernable creature. An ass's colt may be made good for something, but the wild ass's colt will never be reclaimed, nor regards the crying of the driver: see *Job xxxix. 5, 6, 7.* Man thinks himself as much at liberty, and his own master, as the wild ass's colt doth, that is *used to the wilderness*, *Jer. ii. 24.* eager to gratify his own appetites and passions. (4.) Yet he is a proud creature, and self-conceited. He would be wise, would be thought so, values himself upon the honour of wisdom, tho' he will not submit himself to the laws of wisdom. He would be wise, *i. e.* He reacheth after forbidden wisdom, and like his first parents, aiming to be wise above what is written, loseth the tree of life for the tree of knowledge. Now is such a creature as this fit to contend with God, or call him to an account? Did we but better know God and ourselves, we should better know how to carry ourselves to God.

13. If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him; 14. If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. 15. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot, yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear: 16. Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: 17. And thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day: thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. 18. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety. 19. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. 20. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.

Zophar, as the other two, here encourageth Job to hope for better times, if he would but come to a better temper.

1. He gives him good counsel, *ver. 13, 14.* as Eliphaz did, *chap. v. 8.* and Bildad, *chap. viii. 5.* He would have him repent and return to God, and observe the steps of that return.

(1.) He must look within, and get his mind changed, and the tree made good. He must prepare his heart; there the work of conversion and reformation must begin. The heart that wandered from God must be reduced; that was defiled with sin and put into disorder, must be cleansed, and put in order again; that was wavering and unfixed, must be settled and established; so the word



word here signifies: the heart is then prepared to seek God when it is determined and fully resolved to make a business of it, and to go through with it.

(2.) He must look up, and *stretch out his hands towards God*, i. e. must stir up himself to take hold on God; must pray to him with earnestness, and importunity, striving in prayer, and with expectation to receive mercy and grace from him. To *give the hand to the Lord* signifies to yield ourselves to him, and to covenant with him, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. This Job must do, and for the doing of it must prepare his heart. Job had prayed, but Zophar would have him to pray in a better manner, not as an appellant, but as a petitioner and humble supplicant.

(3.) He must amend what was amiss in his own conversation; else his prayers would be ineffectual, ver. 14. *If iniquity be in thy hand*, i. e. If there be any sin which thou dost yet live in the practice of, put it far away, forsake it with detestation, and a holy indignation, stedfastly resolving not to return to it, nor ever to have any thing more to do with it, Ezek. xviii. 31. Hos. xiv. 9. Isa. xxx. 22. If any of the gains of iniquity, any goods gotten by fraud or oppression be in thine hand, make restitution of it, as Zaccheus, Luke xix. 8. and *shake thy hands from holding it*, Isa. xxxiii. 15. The guilt of sin is not removed, if the gain of sin be not restored.

(4.) He must do his utmost to reform his family too. *Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles*: let not thy house harbour or shelter any wicked persons, any wicked practices, or any wealth gotten by wickedness. He suspected that Job's great household had been ill governed, and that where there were many, there were many wicked, and that the ruin of his family was the punishment of the wickedness of it: and therefore if he expected God should return to him he must reform what was amiss there, and tho' wickedness might come into his tabernacles he must not suffer it to dwell there, Psal. ci. 3, &c.

2. He assures him of comfort if he took this counsel, ver. 15, &c. If he would repent and reform, he should without doubt be easy and happy, and all would be well. Perhaps Zophar might insinuate that unless God did speedily make such a change as this in his condition, he and his friends would be confirmed in their opinion of him as an hypocrite and a dissembler with God: but however it speaks a great truth, that *the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever*, Isa. xxxii. 17.

Those that sincerely turn to God may expect,

1. A holy confidence towards God. Then shalt thou lift up thy face towards heaven without spot, thou mayst come boldly to the throne of grace, and not with that terror and amazement expressed, chap. ix. 34. If our hearts condemn us not for hypocrisy and impenitency, then have we confidence in our approaches to God, and expectations from him, 1 John iii. 21. If we are looked upon in the face of the anointed, our faces that were dejected may be lifted up, that were polluted, being washed with the blood of Christ, may be lifted up without spot. We may draw near in full assurance of faith, when we are sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb. x. 22. Some understand this of the clearing up of his credit before men, Psal. xxxvii. 6. If we make our peace with God, we may with cheerfulness look our friends in the face.

2. A holy composedness in themselves. *Thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear, not be afraid of evil tidings*, thy heart being fixed, Psal. cxii. 7. Job was now full of confusion, (chap. x. 15.) while he looked upon God as his enemy, and quarrelled with him; but Zophar assures him if he would submit and humble himself, his mind would be stayed, and he would be freed from those frightful apprehensions he had of God, which put him into such a tofs. The less we are frightened the more we are fixed, and consequently the more fit we are for our services and for our sufferings.

3. A comfortable reflection upon their past troubles, ver. 16. *Thou shalt forget thy misery*, (as the mother forgets her travelling pains for joy that the child is born) thou shalt be perfectly freed from the impressions it makes upon thee, and *thou shalt remember it as waters that pass away*, or are poured out of a vessel, which leave no taste or tincture behind them, as other liquors do. The wounds of thy present affliction shall be perfectly healed, not only without a remaining scar, but without a remaining pain. Job had endeavoured to forget his complaint, chap. ix. 27. but found he could not, his soul *had still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall*: but here Zophar puts him in a way to forget it, let him by faith and prayer bring his griefs and cares to God, and leave them with him, and then he should forget them. Where sin fits heavy, affliction fits light: if we duly remember our sins we shall in comparison with them forget our misery; much more if we obtain the comfort of a sealed pardon, and a sealed peace: he whose iniquity is forgiven shall not say, *I am sick*, but forget that, Isa. xxxiii. 24.

4. A comfortable prospect of their future peace. This Zophar here thinks to please Job with, in answer to the many despairing expressions he had used, as if it were to no purpose for him to hope ever to see good days again in this world; yea, but thou mayst (saith Zophar) and good nights too.

A blessed change he here puts him in hopes of.

1. That tho' now his light was eclipsed it should shine out again, and brighter than ever, ver. 17. That even his setting sun should out-shine his noon-day sun, and his evening be fair and clear as the morning, in respect both of honour and pleasure; that his light should shine out of obscurity, Isa. lviii. 10. and the thick and dark cloud, from behind which his sun should break forth, would serve as a foil to its lustre. That it should shine even in old age, and those evil days should be good days to him. Note, They that truly turn to God then begin to shine forth; and their path is as the shining light, which increaseth, and the period of their day will be the perfection of it; and their evening to this world their morning to a better.

2. That tho' now he was in a continual fear and terror he should live in a holy rest and security, and find himself continually safe and easy, ver. 18. *Thou shalt be secure because there is hope*. Note, Those who have a good hope through grace, in God, and of heaven, are certainly safe, and have reason to be secure, how difficult soever the times are, through which they pass in this world. He that walks uprightly, may thus walk surely, because tho' there is trouble and danger, yet there is hope that all will be well at last. Hope is *an anchor of the soul*, Heb. vi. 19. *Thou shalt dig about thee*, i. e. Thou shalt be as safe as an army in its entrenchments. They that submit themselves to God's government shall be taken under his protection, and then they are safe both day and night. (1.) By day, when they employ themselves abroad, *thou shalt dig in safety*, thou and thy servants for thee, and not be again set upon by the rapparees, who fell upon his servants at plow, chap. i. 14. It is no part of the promised prosperity that he should live in idleness, but that he should have a calling and follow it, and when he was about the business of it should be under the divine protection, thou shalt dig and be safe, not rob and be safe, revel and be safe; the way of duty is the way of safety. (2.) By night when they repose themselves at home. *Thou shalt take thy rest*, (and *the sleep of the labouring man is sweet*) in safety, notwithstanding the dangers of the darkness. The pillar of cloud by day shall be a pillar of fire by night: *thou shalt lie down*, (ver. 19.) not forced to wander where there is no place to lay thy head on, not forced to watch, and sit up in expectation of assaults; but thou shalt go to bed at bed-time, and not only none shall hurt thee, but none shall make thee afraid, or so much as give thee an alarm. Note, It is a great mercy to have quiet nights and undisturbed sleeps: those say so that are within the noise of war. And the way to be quiet is to seek unto God, and keep ourselves in his love. Nothing needs make those afraid who return to God as their rest, and take him for their habitation.

3. That tho' now he was slighted, yet he should be courted; many shall make suit to thee, and think it their interest to secure thy friendship. Suit is made to those that are eminently wise, or reputed to be so, that are very rich, or in power. Zophar knew Job so well that he foresaw, how low soever this present ebb was, if once the tide turned it would flow as high as ever, and he would be again the darling of his country. They that rightly make suit to God, perhaps the day may come, that others will make suit to them, as the foolish virgins to the wise, *give us of your oil*.

Lastly, Zophar concludes with a brief account of the doom of wicked people, ver. 20. *But the eyes of the wicked shall fail*. It should seem, he suspected that Job would not take his counsel, and here tells him what would then come of it, setting death as well as life before him. See what will come of those who persist in their wickedness, and will not be reformed.

(1.) They shall not reach the good they flatter themselves with the hopes of, in this world and in the other. Disappointments will be their doom, their shame, their endless torment. Their eyes shall fail with expecting that which will never come; *when a wicked man dieth, his expectation perisheth*, Prov. xi. 7. *Their hope shall be as a puff of breath*, (Marg.) vanished and gone, past recall: or their hope will perish and expire as a man doth when he gives up the ghost; it will fail them when they have most need of it, and when they expected the accomplishment of it, it will die away, and leave them in utter confusion.

(2.) They shall not avoid the evil which sometimes they frighten themselves with the apprehensions of: they shall not escape the execution of the sentence past upon them, can neither out-brave it, nor out-run it. Those that will not fly to God, will find it in vain to think of flying from him.

## C H A P. XII.

In this and the two following chapters we have Job's answer to Zophar's discourse. In which, as before, he first reasons with his friends. See chap. xiii. 19. and then turns to his God, and directs his expostulations to him, from thence to the end of his discourse. In this chapter he addresseth himself to his friends, and (1.) He condemns what they had said of him, and the judgment they had given of his character, ver. 1—5. (2.) He contradicts and confronts what they said of the destruction of wicked people in this world, shewing that they often prosper, ver. 6—11. (3.) He consents to what they had said of the wisdom and power, and



and sovereignty of God, and the dominion of his providence over the children of men, and all their affairs, confirms this, and enlargeth upon it, ver. 12—25.

1. **A**ND Job answered and said, 2. No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. 3. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? 4. I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn. 5. He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.

The reproofs Job here gives to his friends whether they were just or no, were very sharp, and may serve for a rebuke to all that are proud and scornful, and an exposing of their folly.

1. He upbraids them with their conceitedness of themselves, and the mighty good opinion they seemed to have of their own wisdom in comparison with him; than which nothing is more weak and unbecoming, nor better deserves to be ridiculed, as it is here.

(1.) He represents them as claiming the monopoly of wisdom, ver. 2. He speaks ironically, *no doubt but you are the people*, you think your selves fit to dictate and give law to all mankind, and your own judgment the standard by which every man's opinion must be measured and tried, as if nobody could discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, but you only, and therefore every top-sail must lower to you, and, right or wrong, we must all say as you say, and you three must be the people, the majority, to have the casting vote. Note, It is a very foolish sinful thing for any to think themselves wiser than all mankind beside, or to speak and act confidently and imperiously, as if they thought so. Nay, he goes further, you not only think there are none, but that there will be none as wise as you, and therefore wisdom must die with you, and all the world must be fools when you are gone, and in the dark when your sun is set. Note, It is folly for us to think that there will be any great irreparable loss of us when we are gone, or that we can be ill spared, since God has the residue of the Spirit, and can raise up others more fit than we are to do his work. When wise men and good men die it is comfort to think that wisdom and goodness shall not die with them. Some think Job here reflects upon Zophar's comparing him (as he thought) and others to the wild ass's colt, chap. xi. 12. Yes, saith he, we must be asses, you are the only men.

(2.) He doth himself the justice to put in his claim, as a sharer in the gifts of wisdom, ver. 3. *But I have understanding, a heart as well as you*; nay, *I fall not lower than you*, as it is in the margin; I am as well able to judge of the methods and meanings of the divine providence, and to construe the hard chapters of it as you are. He saith not this to magnify himself; it was no great applause of him to say, *I have understanding as well as you*; no, nor to say, *I understand this matter as well as you*, for what reason had either he or they to be proud of understanding that which was obvious and level to the capacity of the meanest; *yea, who knows not such things as these?* What things you have said, that are true, are plain truths, and common themes, which there are many that can talk as handsomely of as either you or I: but he saith it to humble them, and check the value they had for themselves as doctors of the chair. Note, (1.) It may justly keep us from being proud of our knowledge, to consider how many there are that know as much as we do, and perhaps much more, and to better purpose. (2.) When we are tempted to be harsh in our censures of those we differ from and dispute with, we ought to consider that they also have understanding as well as we, a capacity of judging, and a right of judging for themselves; nay, perhaps they are not inferior to us, but superior, and it is possible they may be in the right, and we in the wrong, and therefore we ought not to judge or despise them, Rom. xiv 3. nor pretend to be masters, Jam. iii. 1. whilst all we are brethren, Mat. xxiii. 8. It is a very reasonable allowance to be made to all we converse with, all we contend with, that they are rational creatures as well as we.

2. He complains of the great contempt with which they had treated him. Those that are haughty, and think too well of themselves, are commonly scornful, and ready to trample upon all about them: Job found it so, at least he thought he did, ver. 4. *I am as one mocked*. I cannot say there was cause for this charge; we will not think Job's friends designed him any abuse, nor aimed at any thing but to convince him, and so in the right method to comfort him; yet he cries out *I am as one mocked*. Note, We are apt to call reproofs reproaches, and to think ourselves mocked when we are but advised and admonished, and this peevishness is our folly, and a great wrong to ourselves and to our friends. Yet we cannot but say there was colour for this charge; they came to comfort him, but they vexed him; gave him counsels and encouragements, but with no great opinion

that either the one or the other would take place; and therefore he thought they mocked him, and it added much to his grief. Nothing more grievous to those that are fallen from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity than to be trodden on, and insulted over when they are down, and it is what they are too apt to be jealous of.

Observe, 1. What aggravated this grievance to him. Two things, (1.) That they were his neighbours, his friends, his companions, so the word signifies, and the scoff of such are oft most spitefully given, and always most heinously taken, Psal. lv. 12, 13. *It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I would have slighted it, and so born it; but it was thou, a man, mine equal*. (2.) That they were professors of religion, such as called upon God, and said that he answered them, for some understand that of the persons mocking: they are such as have a regard to heaven, and an interest in heaven; whose prayers I would therefore be glad of, and thankful for, and whose good opinion I cannot but covet, and therefore whose censures are the more grievous. Note, It is sad, that any who call upon God, should mock their brethren, Jam. iii. 9, 10. and cannot but lie heavy on a good man to be thought ill of by those whom he thinks well of; yet this is no new thing.

2. What supported him under it. (1.) That he had a God to go to, with whom he could lodge his appeal; for some understand those words of the person mocked, that he *calleth upon God, and he answereth him*, and so it agrees with chap. xvi. 20. *My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears to God*. If our friends be deaf to our complaints God is not; if they condemn us, God knows our integrity; if they make the worst of us, he will make the best of us; if they give us cross answers, he will give us kind ones. (2.) That his case was not singular, but very common; *the just upright man is laughed to scorn*: by many he is laughed at even for his justice and his uprightness, his honesty towards men, and his piety towards God; these are derided as foolish things, which silly people needlessly hamper themselves with; as if religion were a jest, and therefore to be made a jest of. By most he is laughed at for any little infirmity or weakness, notwithstanding his justice and uprightness, without any consideration had of that which is so much his honour. Note, It was of old the lot of honest good people to be despised and derided, we are not therefore to think it strange, (1 Pet. iv. 12.) no nor to think it hard if it be our lot, so persecuted they not only the prophets, but even the saints of the patriarchal age, Mat. v. 12. And can we expect to fare better than they?

3. What he suspected to be the true cause of it, and that was in short this: they were themselves rich and at ease, and therefore they despised him who was fallen into poverty. It is the way of the world, we see instances of it daily; they that prosper are praised, but they that are going down, down with them: *he that is ready to slip with his feet*, and fall into trouble, tho' he has formerly shone as a lamp, is then looked upon as a lamp going out, like the snuff of a candle, which we throw to the ground and tread upon, and is accordingly *despised in the thought of him that is at ease*, ver. 5. Even the just upright man, that is in his generation as a burning and shining light, if he enter into temptation, (Psal. lxxiii. 2.) or come under a cloud, is looked upon with contempt. See here, (1.) What is the common fault of those that live in prosperity, being full and easy, and merry themselves, they look scornfully upon those that are in want, pain, and sorrow: they overlook them, take no notice of them, and study to forget them. See Psal. cxxiii. 4. The chief butler drinks wine in bowls, but makes nothing of the afflictions of Joseph. Wealth without grace oft makes men thus haughty, thus careless of their poor neighbours. (2.) What is the common fate of those that fall into adversity. Poverty serves to eclipse all their lustre; tho' they are lamps, yet if taken out of golden candlesticks, and put like Gideon's into earthen pitchers, nobody values them as formerly, but they that live at ease despise them.

6. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. 7. But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: 8. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. 9. Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? 10. In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. 11. Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?

Job's friends all of them went upon this principle, that wicked people cannot prosper long in this world, but some remarkable judgment or other will suddenly light on them: Zophar had concluded with it, that *the eyes of the wicked shall fail*, chap. xi. 20. This principle Job here opposeth, and maintains that God, in disposing mens outward affairs, acts, as a sovereign, reserving the exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state.



1. He asserts it as an undoubted truth, that wicked people may, and often do, prosper long in this world. *ver. 6.* Even great sinners may enjoy great prosperity. Observe (1.) How he describes the sinners: they are robbers, and such as provoke God, the worst kind of sinners, blasphemers and persecutors: perhaps he refers to the Sabeans and Chaldeans, who had robbed him, and had always lived by spoil and rapine, and yet they prospered, all the world saw they did; and there is no disputing against sense: one observation built upon matter of fact is worth twenty notions framed by an hypothesis. Or more generally, all proud oppressors are robbers, and pirates: it is supposed that what is injurious to men is provoking to God, the patron of right, and the protector of mankind. It is not strange, if those that violate the bonds of justice break thro' the obligations of all religion, bid defiance even to God himself, and make nothing of provoking him. (2.) How he describes their prosperity: it is very great; for (1.) Even their tabernacles prosper, those that live with them, and those that come after them, and descend from them. It seems as if a blessing were entailed upon their families, and that is preserved sometimes to succeeding generations which was got by fraud. (2.) They are secure, and not only feel no hurt, but fear none; nor are under any apprehensions of danger, either from threatening providences, or an awakened conscience. But those that provoke God are never the less safe for their being secure. (3.) *Into their hand God brings abundantly: They have more than heart could wish.* *Psal. lxxiii. 7.* Not for necessity only, but for delight; not for themselves only, but for others; not for the present only, but for hereafter; and this from the hand of providence too. God brings plentifully to them; we cannot therefore judge of mens piety by their plenty, nor of what they have in their heart by what they have in their hand.

2. He appeals even to the inferior creatures for the proof of this, the beasts, and fowls, and trees, and even the earth it self, consult these, and they shall tell thee, *ver. 7, 8.* many a good lesson we may learn from them, but what are they here to teach us?

(1.) We may from them learn that the tabernacles of robbers prosper: so some. For, (1.) Even among the brute creatures the greater devour the lesser, and the stronger prey upon the weaker, and men are as the fishes of the sea, *Hab. i. 14.* If sin had not entred, we may suppose there had been no such disorder among the creatures, but the wolf and lamb had lain down together. (2.) These creatures are serviceable to wicked men, and so they declare their prosperity: ask the herds and the flocks to whom they belong, and they will tell you such a robber, such an oppressor, is their owner: the fishes and fowls will tell you they are served up to the tables, and feed the luxury of proud sinners: the earth brings forth her fruits to them, *chap. ix. 24.* and the whole creation groans under the burthen of their tyranny, *Rom. viii. 20, 22.* Note, All the creatures which wicked men abuse, by making them the food and fuel of their lusts, will witness against them another day, *Jam. v. 3, 4.*

(2.) We may from them learn the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God, and that sovereign dominion of his, into which plain and self-evident truth all these difficult dispensations must be resolved. Zophar had made a mighty mystery of it, *chap. xi. 7.* So far from that (saith Job) that so much as we are concerned to know we may learn even from the inferior creatures; for who knows not from all these? any one may easily gather from the book of the creatures that *the hand of the Lord hath wrought this,* *ver. 9. i. e.* That there is a wise providence which guides and governs all these things by rules which we neither are acquainted with, nor are competent judges of. Note, From God's sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, we should learn to acquiesce in all his disposals of the affairs of the children of men, tho' contrary to our measures.

3. He resolves all into the absolute propriety which God has in all the creatures, *ver. 10.* *In whose hand is the soul of every living thing.* All the creatures, and mankind particularly, derive their being from him, owe their being to him, depend upon him for the support of it, lie at his mercy, are under his direction and dominion, and entirely at his dispose, and at his summons must resign their lives. All souls are his, and may he not do what he will with his own? The name Jehovah is used here, *ver. 9.* and it is the only time that we meet with it in all the discourses between Job and his friends, for God was in that age more known by the name of *Shaddai, the Almighty.*

Those words, *ver. 11.* *doth not the ear try words, as the mouth taste meat?* may be taken either as the conclusion of the foregoing discourse, or the preface to what follows. The mind of man has as good a faculty of discerning between truth and error, when duly stated, as the palate has of discerning between what is sweet and what is bitter: He therefore demands from his friends a liberty to judge for himself of what they had said, and desires them to use the same liberty in judging of what he had said; nay, he seems to appeal to any man's impartial judgment in this controversy: let the ear try the words on both sides, and it would be found he was in the right. Note, The ear must try words, before it receives them, so as to subscribe to them. As by the taste we judge what food is wholesome to the body, and what not, so by the spirit of discerning we must judge what doctrine is sound

and savory, and wholesome, and what not, *1 Cor. x. 15.—xi. 13.*

12. With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding. 13. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. 14. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. 15. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. 16. With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. 17. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. 18. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. 19. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. 20. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. 21. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. 22. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. 23. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straitneth them again. 24. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. 25. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

This is a noble discourse of Job's concerning the wisdom, power, and sovereignty, of God, in ordering and disposing of all the affairs of the children of men, according to the counsel of his own will, which none dares gainsay, or can resist. Take both him and them out of the controversy in which they were so warmly engaged, and they all speak admirably well, but in that sometimes we scarce know what to make of them. It were well if wise and good men that differ in their apprehensions about lesser things, would see it to be for their honour and comfort, and the edification of others, to dwell most upon those great things in which they are agreed. On this subject Job speaks like himself; here are no passionate complaints, no peevish reflections, but every thing masculine and great.

1. He asserts the unsearchable wisdom and irresistible power of God. It is allowed that among men there is *wisdom and understanding*, *ver. 12.* But it is to be found only with some few, with the ancient, and those that are blessed with length of days, who get it by long experience, and constant experience; and when they have got the wisdom, they have lost the strength, and are unable to execute the results of their wisdom: but now with God there is both wisdom and strength, wisdom to design the best, and strength to accomplish what is designed: he doth not get counsel and understanding as we do, by observation, but he hath it essentially and eternally in himself, *ver. 13.* What is the wisdom of antient men compared with the wisdom of the Antient of days! it is but little that we know, and less that we can do; but God can do every thing, and *no thought can be withholden from him.* Happy they that have this God for their God, for they have infinite wisdom and strength engaged for them! Foolish and fruitless are all the attempts of men against him, *ver. 14.* *He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again.* Note, There is no contending with the divine providence, nor breaking the measures of it. As he had said before, *chap. ix. 12.* *He takes away, and who can hinder him?* so he saith again, what God saith cannot be gaind, nor what he doth undone: There is no rebuilding what God will have to lie in ruins; witness the tower of Babel, which the undertakers could not go on with; and the desolations of Sodom and Gomorrah, which could never be repaired. See *Isa. xxv. 2. Ezek. xxvi. 14. Rev. xviii. 21.* There is no releasing those whom God has condemned to a perpetual imprisonment, if he shut up a man by sickness, reduce him to straits, and embarrass him in his affairs, there can be no opening. He shuts up in the grave, and none can break open those sealed doors; shuts up in hell, in chains of darkness, and none can pass that great gulf fixed.

2. He gives an instance for the proof of it in nature, *ver. 15.* God has the command of *the waters, binds them as in a garment*, *Prov. xxx. 4.* holds them *in the hollow of his hand*, *Isa. xl. 12.* and he can punish the children of men either by the defect, or by the excess of them: as men break the laws of virtue by extremes on each hand, both defects and excesses, while the virtue is in the mean, so God corrects them by extremes, and denies them the mercy which is in the mean. (1.) Great droughts are sometimes great judgments, he *withholdeth the waters, and they dry up*, if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron, if the rain be denied, fountains dry up, and their streams are wanted, fields are parched and their fruits are wanted, *Amos iv. 7.* (2.) Great wet is sometimes a great judgment, raiseth the waters, and overturns the earth, the products of it, the buildings upon it. A sweeping rain is said to *leave no food*, *Prov.*



Prov. xxviii. 3. See how many ways God has of contending with a sinful people, and taking from them abused, forfeited mercies, and how utterly unable we are to contend with him. If we might invert the order, this verse would fitly refer to Noah's flood, that ever-memorable instance of the divine power: God then in wrath sent the waters out, and they overturned the earth, but in mercy he withheld them, shut the windows of heaven, and the fountains of the great deep, and then in a little time they dried up.

3. He gives many instances of it in God's powerful management of the children of men, crossing their purposes, and serving his own by them, and upon them, over-ruling all their counsels, over-powering all their attempts, and overcoming all their oppositions. What changes doth God make with men, what turns doth he give them, how easily, how surprizingly!

In general, *ver. 16. with him is strength and reason*, so some translate it; strength and consistency with himself: it is an elegant word in the original; with him is the very quintessence and extract of wisdom. With him is power and all that is, so some read it: He is what he is himself, and by him and in him all things subsist. Having this strength and wisdom he knows how to make use, not only of those that are wise and good, who willingly and designedly serve him, but even of those that are foolish and bad, that one would think could be made no way serviceable to the designs of his providence: *the deceived and the deceiver are his*; the simplest men that are deceived are not below his notice, the subtlest men that do deceive cannot with all their subtilty escape his cognizance. The world is full of deceit, the one half of mankind cheats the other, and God suffers it, and from both will at last bring glory to himself. The deceivers make tools of the deceived, but the great God makes tools of them both, wherewith he works and none can let him. He has wisdom and might enough to manage all the fools and knaves in the world, and knows how to serve his own purposes by them, notwithstanding the weakness of the one, and the wickedness of the other. When Jacob by a fraud got the blessing, the design of God's grace was served. When Ahab was drawn by a false prophecy into an expedition that was his ruin, the design of God's justice was served, and in both *the deceived and the deceiver* were at his dispose. See *Ezek. xiv. 9.* God would not suffer the sin of the deceiver, nor the misery of the deceived, if he knew not how to set bounds to both, and bring glory to himself out of both. *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent* thus reigns, and it is well he doth, for otherwise there is so little wisdom, and so little honesty in the world, that it had all been in confusion and ruin long ago.

He next descends to the particular instances of the wisdom and power of God in the revolutions of states and kingdoms; for thence he fetcheth his proofs, rather than from the like operations of providence concerning private persons and families; because the more high and publick the station is in which men are placed, the more the changes that are concerning them are taken notice of, and consequently the more illustriously doth providence shine forth in them: And it is easy to argue, if God can thus turn and toss the great ones of the earth, like a ball in a large place, (as the prophet speaks, *Isa. xxii. 18.*) much more the little ones, and with him to whom states and kingdoms must truckle, it is sure the greatest madness for us to contend. Some think Job here refers to the extirpation of those powerful nations, the Rephaim, the Zurim, the Emim, and the Horites, which is mentioned, *Gen. xiv. 5, 6. Deut. ii. 10, 20.* in which, perhaps, it was particularly taken notice how strangely they were infatuated and enfeebled: but if so, it is designed to shew, that whenever the like is done in the affairs of nations, it is God that doth it, and we must therein observe his sovereign dominion, even over those that think themselves most powerful, politick, and absolute. Compare this with that of Eliphaz, *chap. v. 12, &c.*

Let us gather up the particular changes here instanced in, which God makes upon persons, either for the destruction of nations, and the planting of others in their room, or for the turning out of a particular government and ministry, and the elevation of another in its room, which may be a blessing to the kingdom; witness the glorious Revolution in our own land, twenty years ago, in which we saw as happy an exposition as ever was given of this discourse of Job's.

1. Those that were wise are sometimes strangely infatuated, and in that the hand of God must be acknowledged, *ver. 17. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled*, as trophies of his victory over them, spoiled of all the honour and wealth they have got by their policy, nay, spoiled of the wisdom it self for which they had been celebrated, and the success they promised themselves in their projects: his counsel stands, while all their devices are brought to nought, and their designs baffled, and so they are spoiled both of the satisfaction and of the reputation of their wisdom. *He maketh the judges fools*: by a work on their minds he deprives them of their qualifications for business, and so they become really fools: and by a disposal of their affairs, he makes the issue and event of their projects to be quite contrary to what they themselves intended, and so he makes them look like fools. Achitophel, one in whom this scripture was remarkably fulfilled, his counsel became foolishness, and he, according; to his

name, *the brother of a fool.* See *Isa. xix. 13.* *The princes of Zoan are become fools; they have seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof.* Let not the wise man therefore glory in his wisdom, nor the ablest counsellors and judges be proud of their station, but humbly depend upon God for the continuance of their abilities. Even the aged who seem to hold their wisdom by prescription, and think they have got it by their own industry, and therefore have an indefeasible title to it, may yet be deprived of it, and often are by the infirmities of age, which make them twice children, he *taketh away the understanding of the aged*, *ver. 20.* The aged that were most depended on for advice, fail those that depended on them. We read of an old and yet foolish king, *Eccl. iv. 13.*

2. Those that were high and in authority are strangely brought down, impoverished and enslaved, and it is God that humbles them, *ver. 18. He looseth the bond of kings*, and taketh from them the power wherewith they ruled their subjects, perhaps enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour, strips them of all the ensigns of their honour and authority, and all the supports of their tyranny, unbuckles their belts, so that the sword drops from their side, and then no marvel if the crown quickly drops from their heads on which presently follows the girding of their loins with a girdle, a badge of servitude, for servants went with their loins girt. Thus he leads great princes away spoiled of all their power and wealth, and that in which they pleased and prided themselves, *ver. 19.* Note, Kings are not exempt from God's jurisdiction: To us they are gods, but men to him, and subject to more than the common changes of human life.

3. Those that were strong are strangely weakned, and it is God that weakens them, *ver. 21. and overthroweth the mighty*, *ver. 19.* strong bodies are weakned by age and sickness, powerful armies moulder and come to nothing, and their strength will not secure them from a fatal overthrow. No force can stand before omnipotence, no not that of Goliath.

4. Those that were famed for eloquence, and entrusted with publick business are strangely silenced, and have nothing to say, *ver. 20. He removeth away the speech of the trusty*, so that they cannot speak as they intended, and as they used to do, with freedom and clearness, but blunder and falter, and make nothing of it. Or, they cannot speak what they intended, but the contrary, as Balaam, who blessed those whom he was called to curse. Let not the orator therefore be proud of his rhetorick, nor use it to any ill purposes, lest God take it away, who made man's mouth.

5. Those that were honoured and admired strangely fall into disgrace: he *poureth contempt upon princes*, *ver. 21.* He leaves them to themselves to do mean things, or alters the opinions of men concerning them. If princes themselves dishonour God, and despise him, if they do indignities to the people of God and trample upon them, they shall be lightly esteemed, and God will pour contempt upon them. See *Psal. cvii. 40.* Commonly none more abject in themselves, nor more abused by others when they are down, than those that were haughty and insolent when they were in power.

6. That which was secret and lay hid is strangely brought to light and laid open. *ver. 22. He discovers deep things out of darkness.* Plots closely laid are discovered and defeated, wickedness closely committed and artfully concealed is discovered, and the guilty brought to condign punishment: secret treasons, (*Eccl. x. ult.*) secret murders, secret whoredoms. The cabinet counsels of princes are before God's eye, 2 *Kings vi. 11.*

7. Kingdoms have their ebbings and flowings, their waxings and wanings, and both are from God, *ver. 22. He sometimes increaseth their numbers*, and enlargeth their bounds; so that they make a figure among the nations, and become formidable: but after a while, by some undiscerned cause, perhaps they are destroyed and straitned, made few and poor, cut short, and many of them cut off, and so they are rendred despicable among their neighbours; and they that were the head become the tail of the nations. See *Psal. cvii. 38, 39.*

8. They that were bold and courageous, and made nothing of dangers are strangely cowed and dispirited; and this also is the Lord's doing. *He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people*, (*ver. 24.*) that were their leaders and commanders, and were most famed for their martial fire, and great achievements, when any thing was to be done they were heartless, and ready to flee at the shaking of a leaf. *Psal. lxxvi. 5.*

9. They that were driving on their projects with full speed are strangely bewildered and at a loss: they know not where they are, nor what they do, are unsteady in their counsels, and uncertain in their motions, off and on, this way and that way, wander like men in a desert, *ver. 24. grope like men in the dark*, and stagger like men in drink, *ver. 25. Isa. lix. 10.* Note, God can soon non-plus the deepest politicians, and bring the greatest wits to their wits end, to shew that wherein they deal proudly he is above them.

Thus are the revolutions of kingdoms wonderfully brought about by an over-ruling providence. Heaven and earth are shaken, but the Lord sits king for ever, and with him we look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken.



## C H A P. XIII.

*Job here comes to make application of what he had said in the foregoing chapter, and now we have him not in so good a temper as he was in then: For, (1.) He is very bold with his friends, comparing himself with them, notwithstanding the mortifications he was under, ver. 1, 2. Condemning them for their falshood, their forwardness to judge, their partiality and deceitfulness, under colour of pleading God's cause, ver. 4—8. and threatening them with the judgments of God for their so doing, ver. 9—12. desiring them to be silent, ver. 5, 13, 17. and turning from them to God, ver. 3. (2.) He is very bold with his God. (1.) In some expressions his faith is very bold, yet that is not more bold than welcome, ver. 15, 16, 18. But (2.) In other expressions his passion is rather too bold in expostulations with God concerning the deplorable condition he was in, ver. 14, 19, &c. complaining of the confusion he was in, ver. 20—22. and the loss he was at to find out the sin that provoked God thus to afflict him; and, in short, of the rigour of God's proceedings against him, ver. 23—28.*

1. **L**O, mine eye hath seen all *this*, mine ear hath heard and understood it. 2. What ye know, *the same* do I know also: I am not inferior unto you. 3. Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. 4. But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. 5. O that you would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom. 6. Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips. 7. Will you speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? 8. Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God? 9. Is it good that he should search you out? or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? 10. He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons. 11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? 12. Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay.

Job here warmly expresseth his resentments of the unkindness of his friends to him.

1. He comes up with them as one that understood the matter in dispute as well as they, and did not need to be taught by them, ver. 1, 2. They compelled him, as the Corinthians did Paul, to commend himself, and his own knowledge, yet not in a way of self-applause, but of self-justification. All he had said before, his eye had seen confirmed by many instances, and his ear had heard seconded by many authorities, and he well understood it, and what use to make of it. Happy they that do not only see and hear, but understand the greatness, and glory, and sovereignty of God. And this he thought would justify what he had said before, chap. xii. 3. which he repeats here, ver. 2. *What ye know, the same do I know also*; so that I need not come to you to be taught, *I am not inferior unto you* in wisdom. Note, Those that enter into disputation, enter into temptation to magnify themselves, and vilify their brethren more than is fit, and therefore ought to watch and pray against the workings of pride.

2. He turns from them to God, ver. 3. *Surely I would speak to the Almighty, &c.* I can promise my self no satisfaction in talking with you, O that I might have liberty to reason with God! He would not be so hard upon me as you are. The prince himself will perhaps give audience to a poor petitioner with more mildness, and patience, and condescension, than the servants will. Job would rather argue with God himself than with his friends. See here (1.) What confidence they have towards God, whose hearts condemn them not of reigning hypocrisy: They can with humble boldness appear before him, and appeal to him. (2.) What comfort they have in God, whose neighbours unjustly condemn them: If they may not speak to them with any hopes of a fair hearing, yet they may speak to the Almighty, they have easy access to him, and shall find acceptance with him.

3. He condemns them for their unjust and uncharitable usage of him, ver. 4. (1.) They falsely accused him, and that was unjust; *ye are forgers of lies*. They framed a wrong hypothesis concerning the divine providence, and belyed that, as if that did never remarkably afflict any but wicked men in this world; and from thence they drew a false judgment concerning Job, that he was certainly an hypocrite: For this gross mistake both in doctrine and application, he thinks an indictment of forgery lies against them. To speak lies is bad enough, tho' but at second hand, but to forge them with contrivance and deliberation is much worse: Yet against this wrong neither innocency nor excellency will be a fence. (2.) They basely deceived him, and that was unkind: They undertook his cure, and pretended to be his physicians, but they were all physicians of no value; idol-physicians, that can do me no more good than an idol can: They were worthless physicians, who neither understood his case, nor knew how to prescribe to him, meer quacks that pretended to mighty things, but in conference added nothing

to him, he was never the wiser for all they said. Thus to broken hearts and wounded consciences, all creatures without Christ are physicians of no value, on which one may spend all, and be never the better, but rather grow worse, *Mark v. 26.*

4. He begs they would be silent, and give him a patient hearing, ver. 5, 6. (1.) He thinks it would be a credit to themselves if they would say no more, having said too much already. *Hold your peace, and it shall be your wisdom*, for thereby you will conceal your ignorance and ill nature; which now appear in all you say. They pleaded they could not forbear speaking, chap. iv. 2.—xi. 2, 3. but he tells them they had more consulted their own reputation, if they had enjoined themselves silence. Better say nothing than nothing to the purpose, or say that which tends to the dishonour of God, and the grief of our brethren. *Even a fool when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise*, because nothing appears to the contrary, *Prov. xvii. 28.* And as silence is an evidence of wisdom, so it is a means of it, as it gives time to think and hear. (2.) He thinks it would be a piece of justice to him to hear what he had to say. *Hear now my reasoning*. Perhaps, tho' they did not interrupt him in his discourse, yet they seemed careless, and did not much heed what he said, he therefore begs they would not only hear but hearken. Note, We should be very willing and glad to hear what those have to say for themselves whom upon any account we are in temptation to have hard thoughts of. Many a man, if he could but be fairly heard, would be fairly acquitted, even in the consciences of those that run him down,

5. He endeavours to convince them of the wrong they did to God's honour, while they pretended to plead for him, ver. 7, 8. They valued themselves upon it that they spoke for God, were advocates for him, and had undertaken to justify him, and his proceedings against Job. And being (as they thought) of counsel for the sovereign, they expected not only the ear of the court, and the last word, but judgment on their side: But Job tells them plainly, (1.) That God and his cause did not need such advocates; will ye think to contend for God? as if his justice were clouded and wanted to be cleared up, or as if he were at a loss what to say, and wanted you to speak for him. Will you that are so weak and passionate put in for the honour of pleading God's cause? Good work ought not to be put into bad hands. *Will you accept his person?* Those that have not right on their side, if they carry their cause, it is by the partiality of the judge, in favour of their persons; but God's cause is so just, that it needs no such methods for the support of it. He is a God, and can plead for himself, (*Judg. vi. 31.*) and if you were for ever silent, the heavens would declare his righteousness. (2.) That God's cause suffered by such management. Under pretence of justifying God in afflicting Job, they magisterially condemn him as an hypocrite and an ill man: This (saith he) is speaking wickedly, for uncharitableness and censoriousness is wickedness, it is great wickedness; it is an offence to God to wrong our brethren: it is talking deceitfully, for you condemn one whom yet perhaps your own consciences at the same time cannot but acquit: Your principles are false, and your arguments fallacious, and will it excuse you to say it is for God? No, for a good intention will not justify, much less will it sanctify, an ill word or action. God's truth needs not our lie, nor God's cause either our sinful policies or our sinful passions: The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, nor may we *do evil that good may come*, *Rom. iii. 7, 8.* Pious frauds (as they call them) are impious cheats; and devout persecutions horrid profanations of the name of God, as theirs that *hated their brethren, and cast them out, saying, Let the Lord be glorified*, *Isa. lxvi. 5.* *Joh. xvi. 2.*

6. He endeavours to possess them with a fear of God's judgment, and so to bring them to a better temper. Let them not think to impose upon God as they might upon a man like themselves, nor expect to gain his countenance in their ill practices, by pretending a zeal for him and his honour: As one man mocks another by flattering him, do you think so to mock him and deceive him? No, those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove to have put a cheat upon themselves: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

That they might not think thus to jest with God, and affront him, he would have them to consider both God and themselves, and then they would find themselves unable to enter into judgment with him.

1. Let them consider what a God he is, into whose service they had thus thrust themselves, and to whom they really did so much disservice, and enquire whether they could give him a good account of what they did.

Consider (1.) The strictness of his scrutiny, and enquiries concerning them, ver. 9. *Is it good that he should search you out?* Can you bear to have the principles looked into which you go upon in your censures, and to have the bottom of the matter found out? Note, It concerns us all seriously to consider whether it will be to our advantage or no that God searcheth the heart: It is good to an upright man who means honestly that God should search him, therefore he prays for it, *Search me, O God, and know my heart*. God's omniscience is a witness of his sincerity; but it is bad to him that looks one way, and rows another, that God should search him out, and lay him open to his confusion.

2. The severity of his rebukes and displeasure against them, ver. 10. *If ye do accept persons*, tho' but secretly, and in heart, *he will*



*will surely reprove you*: He will be so far from being pleased with your censures of me, tho' it be under colour of vindicating him, that he will resent it as a great provocation, as any prince or great man would, if an ill action were done under colour of his name, and advancing his interest. Note, What we do amiss we shall certainly be reprov'd for one way or other, one time or other, tho' it be done never so secretly.

(3.) The terror of his majesty, which if they would duly stand in awe of, they would not do that which would make them obnoxious to his wrath, *ver. 11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid?* You that have great knowledge of God, and profess religion and a fear of him, how dare you talk at this rate, and give your selves so great a liberty of speech? *Ought ye not to walk and talk in the fear of God?* Neh. v. 9. *Should not his dread fall upon you,* and give check to your passions? Methinks Job speaks this as one that did himself know the terror of the Lord, and lived in a holy fear of him, whatever his friends suggested to the contrary. Note (1.) There is in God a dreadful excellency. He is the most excellent being, has all excellencies in himself, and in each infinitely excels any creature. His excellencies in themselves are amiable and lovely: He is the most beautiful being; but considering man's distance from God by nature, and his defection and degeneracy by sin, his excellencies are dreadful: His power, holiness, justice, yea, and his goodness too, are dreadful excellencies: They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. (2.) A holy awe of this dreadful excellency should fall upon us and make us afraid. This would awaken impenitent sinners, and bring them to repentance, and would influence all to be careful to please him, and afraid of offending him.

2. Let them consider themselves, and what an unequal match they were for this great God, *ver. 12.* Your remembrances, all that in you for which you hope to be remembered when you are gone, is like unto ashes, worthless and weak, and easily trampled on and blown away: *Your bodies are like bodies of clay,* mouldring and coming to nothing; your memories you think will survive your bodies, but alas, they are like ashes, which will be shovelled up with your dust. Note, The consideration of our own meanness and mortality should make us afraid of offending God, and is a good reason why we should not despise and trample upon our brethren. Bishop Patrick gives another sense of this verse, your remonstrances on God's behalf are no better than dust, and the arguments you accumulate but like so many heaps of dirt.

13. Hold your peace, let me alone that I may speak, and let come on me what will. 14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? 15. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. 16. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. 17. Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears. 18. Behold now, I have ordered my cause, I know that I shall be justified. 19. Who is he that will plead with me? for now if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost. 20. Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide my self from thee. 21. Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid. 22. Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me.

Job here takes fresh hold, fast hold of his integrity, as one that was resolved not to let it go, nor suffer it to be wrested from him: His firmness in this matter is commendable, and his warmth excusable.

1. He bespeaks his friends and all the company to let him alone, and not interrupt him in what he was about to say, *ver. 13.* but diligently to hearken to it, *ver. 17.* He would have his own protestation to be decisive, for none but God and himself knew his heart; be you silent from me therefore, and let me hear no more of you, but do you hearken diligently to what I say, and let my own oath for confirmation be an end of the strife.

2. He resolves to adhere to the testimony his own conscience gave of his integrity; and tho' his friends called it obstinacy, that should not shake his constancy; I will speak in my own defence, and let come on me what will, *ver. 13.* Let my friends put what construction they please upon it, and think the worse of me for it, I hope God will not make my necessary defence to be my offence, as you do: He will justify me, *ver. 18.* and then nothing can come amiss to me. Note, Those that are upright, and have the assurance of their uprightness, may cheerfully welcome every event: Come what will they are ready for it. It is *bene præparatum peccatus*. He resolves, *ver. 15.* he will maintain his own ways; he will never part with the satisfaction he had in having walked uprightly with God, but tho' he could not justify every word he had spoken, yet in the general his ways were good, and he would maintain it; and why should he not, since that was his great support under his present exercises, as it was Hezekiah's, *Now Lord, remember how I have walked before thee.* Nay, he would not only not betray his own cause, or give it up, but he would

openly avow his sincerity, for, *ver. 19.* if I hold my tongue, and do not speak for my self, my silence now will for ever silence me, for I shall certainly give up the ghost, *ver. 19.* If I cannot be cleared, yet let me be eased by what I say, as Elihu, *chap. xxxii. 17.*

3. He complains of the extremity of pain and misery he was in, *ver. 14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth?* That is, (1.) Why do I suffer such agonies? I cannot but wonder that God should lay so much upon me, when he knows I am not a wicked man. He was ready not only to rend his clothes, but even to tear his flesh, through the greatness of his affliction, and saw himself at the brink of death, and his life in his hand, yet his friends could not charge him with any enormous crime, nor could he himself discover any; no marvel then he was in such confusion. (2.) Why do I stifle and smother the protestations of my innocence? When a man with great difficulty keeps in what he would say, he bites his lips: Now, saith he, why may not I take a liberty to speak, since I do but vex my self, add to my torment, and endanger my life, by refraining? Note, It would vex the most patient man, when he has lost every thing else, to be denied the comfort (if he deserves it) of a good conscience and a good name.

4. He comforts himself in God, and still keeps hold of his confidence in him. Observe here,

(1.) What he depends upon God for: Justification and salvation, the two great things we hope for through Christ, (1.) Justification, *ver. 18. I have ordered my cause,* and, upon the whole matter, *I know that I shall be justified:* This he knew, because he knew that his Redeemer lived, *chap. xix. 25.* They whose hearts are upright with God, in walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit, may be sure that through Christ there shall be no condemnation to them, but whoever lays any thing to their charge, they shall be justified, they may know that they shall. (2.) Salvation, *ver. 16.* He also shall be my salvation: He means it not of temporal salvation, he had little expectation of that, but concerning his eternal salvation he was very confident, that God would not only be his Saviour to make him happy, but his salvation, in the vision and fruition of whom he should be happy. And the reason why he depended on God for salvation is, because *an hypocrite shall not come before him:* He knew himself not to be an hypocrite, and that none but hypocrites are rejected of God, and therefore concluded he should not be rejected. Sincerity is our evangelical perfection, nothing will ruin us but the want of that.

(2.) With what constancy he depends upon him: *Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him,* *ver. 15.* This is a high expression of faith, and what we should all labour to come up to; to trust in God tho' he slay us. That is, we must be well pleased with God as a friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an enemy, *Job. xxiii. 8—10.* We must believe that all shall work for good to us, even then when all seems to make against us, *Jer. xxiv. 5.* We must proceed and persevere in the way of our duty, tho' it cost us all that is dear to us in this world, even life it self, *Heb. xi. 35.* We must depend upon the performance of the promise, when all the ways leading to it are shut up, *Rom. iv. 18.* We must rejoice in God; when we have nothing else to rejoice in, and cleave to him; yea, tho' we cannot for the present find comfort in him: In a dying hour we must derive from him living comforts, and this is to trust in him tho' he slay us.

5. He wishes to argue the case even with God himself, if he might but have leave to settle the preliminaries of the treaty, *ver. 20, 21, 22.* He had desired, *ver. 3.* to reason with God, and is still of the same mind, he will not hide himself, *i. e.* He will not decline the trial, nor dread the issue of it, but under two provisos, (1.) That his body might not be tortured with this exquisite pain: *Withdraw thine hand far from me,* for while I am in this extremity I am fit for nothing; I can make a shift to talk with my friends, but I know not how to address my self to thee. When we are to converse with God, we have need to be composed, and as free as possible from every thing that may make us uneasy. (2.) That his mind might not be terrified with the tremendous majesty of God; *let not thy dread make me afraid,* either let the manifestations of thy presence be familiar, or let me be enabled to bear them without disorder and disturbance. Moses himself trembled before God, so did Isaiah and Habakkuk, *O God thou art terrible even in thy holy places.* Lord, saith Job, let not me be put into such a consternation of spirit, together with this bodily affliction, for then I must certainly drop the cause, and shall make nothing of it. See what a folly it is for men to put off their repentance and conversion to a sick-bed and a death-bed! How can even a good man, much less a bad man, reason with God, so as to be justified before him, when he is upon the rack of pain, and under the terror of the arrests of death? At such a time it is very bad to have the great work to do, but very comfortable to have it done, as it was to Job, who if he might but have a little breathing time, was ready either (1.) To hear God speaking to him by his word, and return an answer; *Call thou, and I will answer,* or (2.) To speak to him by prayer, and expect an answer, *Let me speak, and answer thou me,* *ver. 22.* Compare this with *chap. ix. 34, 35.* where he spoke to the same purpose. In short, the badness of his case was at present such a damp upon him as he could not get over,



over, otherwise he was well assured of the goodness of his cause, and doubted not but to have the comfort of it at last, when the present cloud was over. With such holy boldness may the upright come to the throne of grace, not doubting but to find mercy there.

23. How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression, and my sin. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? 25. Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? 26. For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. 27. Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet. 28. And he as a rotten thing consumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten.

Here, 1. Job enquires after his sins, and begs to have them discovered to him: he looks up to God and asks him what was the number of them, *how many are mine iniquities?* and what the particulars of them? *Make me to know my transgressions,* ver. 23. His friends were ready enough to tell him how numerous and how heinous they were, chap. xxii. 5. But, Lord, saith he, let me know them from thee, *for thy judgment is according to truth*, theirs is not: this may be taken either, (1.) As a passionate complaint of hard usage, that he was punished for his faults, and yet was not told what his faults were. Or, (2.) As a prudent appeal to God from the censures of his friends; he desired all his sins might be brought to light, as knowing they would then appear nothing so many, nor so mighty, as his friends suspected him to be guilty of. Or, (3.) As a pious request to the same sense with that which Elihu directed him to, chap. xxxiv. 32. *That which I see not teach thou me.* Note, A true penitent is willing to know the worst by himself; and we should all desire to know what our transgressions are, that we may be particular in the confession of them, and in our guard against them for the future.

2. He bitterly complains of God's withdrawals from him, ver. 24. *Wherefore hidest thou thy face?* This must be meant of something more than his outward afflictions, for the loss of estate, children, health, might well consist with God's love, when that was all he blessed the name of the Lord, but *his soul was also sore vexed*, and that is it which he here laments, (1.) That the favours of the Almighty were suspended, God hid his face as one strange to him, displeased with him, shy and regardless of him: (2.) That the terrors of the Almighty were inflicted and impressed upon him, God held him for his enemy, shot his arrows at him, chap. vi. 4. and set him as a mark, chap. vii. 20. Note, The holy God sometimes denies his favours, and discovers his terrors to the best and dearest of his saints and servants in this world. This case occurs not only in the production, but sometimes in the progress of the divine life; evidences for heaven are eclipsed, sensible communions interrupted, dread of divine wrath impressed, and the returns of comfort for the present despaired of, *Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9.—lxxxviii. 7, 15, 16.* These are grievous burthens to a gracious soul, that values God's loving kindness as better than life, *Prov. xviii. 14. A wounded spirit who can bear?* Job, by asking here, why hidest thou thy face? teacheth us that when at any time we are under the sense of God's withdrawals, we are concerned to enquire into the reason of them. What is the sin for which he corrects us? and what the good he designs us? Job's sufferings were typical of the sufferings of Christ, from whom not only men hid their faces, *Isa. liii. 3.* but God hid his. Witness the darkness which surrounded him on the cross when he cried out, *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* If this were done to these green trees, what shall be done to the dry? They will for ever be forsaken.

3. He humbly pleads with God his own utter inability to stand before him, ver. 25. *Wilt thou break a leaf, pursue the dry stubble?* Lord, is it for thine honour to trample upon one that is down already? Or to crush one that neither hath, nor pretends to any power to resist thee? Note, We ought to have such an apprehension of the goodness and compassion of God, as to believe that he will not *break the bruised reed*, Mat. xii. 20.

4. He sadly complains of God's severe dealings with him: he owns it was for his sins that God thus contended with him, but thinks it hard,

(1.) That his former sins long since committed should now be remembered against him, and he should be reckoned with for the old scores, ver. 26. *Thou writest bitter things against me.* Afflictions are bitter things, writing of them notes deliberation and determination, written as a warrant for execution: it notes also the continuance of his affliction, for that which is written remains, and herein thou *makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth*, i. e. thou punishest me for them, and thereby puttest me in mind of them, and obligest me to renew my repentance for them. Note, 1. God sometimes writes very bitter things against the

best and dearest of his saints and servants, both in outward afflictions and inward disquiet; trouble in body and trouble in mind, that he may humble them and prove them, and do them good in their latter end. 2. That the sins of youth are oftentimes the smart of age, both in respect of sorrow within, *Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.* and suffering without, *Job xx. 11.* Time doth not wear out the guilt of sin. 3. That when God writes bitter things against us, his design therein is to make us possess our iniquities, to bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them, as to break us off from them. This is all the fruit to take away our sin.

(2.) That his present mistakes and miscarriages should be so strictly taken notice of, and so severely animadverted upon, ver. 27. *Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks*, not only to afflict me, and expose me to shame, nor only to keep me from out-running the strokes of thy wrath, but that thou mayst critically remark all my motions, and look narrowly to all my paths, to correct me for every false step; nay, for but a look awry, or a word misapplied; nay, thou *settest a print upon the heels of my feet*, scorest down every thing I do amiss, to reckon for it; or no sooner have I trod wrong, tho' never so little, but immediately I smart for it; the punishment treads upon the very heels of the sin. Guilt both of the oldest and of the freshest date is put together to make up the cause of my calamity. Now, (1.) It was not true that God did thus seek advantages against him; he is not thus extream to mark what we do amiss, if he were, there were no abiding for us, *Psal. cxxx. 3.* But he is so far from this, that he deals not with us according to the desert, no not of our manifest sins which are not *found by secret search*, *Jer. ii. 34.* This therefore was the language of Job's melancholy; his sober thoughts never represented God thus as a hard master. (2.) But we should keep such a strict and jealous eye as this upon ourselves, and our own steps, both for the discovery of sin past, and the prevention of it for the future. It is good for us all to *ponder the path of our feet*.

5. He finds himself wasting away apace under the heavy hand of God, ver. 28. He, that is man, as a rotten thing, the principle of whose putrefaction is in itself, consumeth, even like a moth-eaten garment, which goes ever the longer the worse. Or he, i. e. God, like rottenness, and like a moth, consumeth me. Compare this with, *Hos. v. 12. I will be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness:* and see, *Psal. xxxix. 11.* Note, Man at the best wears fast; but under God's rebukes especially he is soon gone. While there is so little soundness in the soul, no marvel there is so little soundness in the flesh, *Psal. xxxviii. 3.*

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Job had turned from speaking to his friends, finding it to no purpose to reason with them, and here goes on to speak to God and himself. He had minded his friends of their frailty and mortality, chap. xiii. 12. here he minds himself of his own, and pleads it with God for some mitigation of his miseries. We have here an account, (1.) Of man's life, that it is short, ver. 1. 2. Sorrowful, ver. 1. Sinful, ver. 4. Stinted, ver. 5, 14. (2.) Of man's death, that it puts a final period to our present life, to which we shall not again return, ver. 7—12. That it hides us from the calamities of life, ver. 13. destroys the hopes of life, ver. 18, 19. Sends us away from the business of life, ver. 20. and keeps us in the dark concerning our relations in this life, how much soever we have formerly been in care about them, ver. 21, 22. (3.) The use Job makes of all this. (1.) He pleads it with God, who he thought was too strict and severe with him, ver. 16, 17. begging that, in consideration of his frailty, he would not contend with him, ver. 3. but grant him some respite, ver. 6. (2.) He engageth himself to prepare for death, ver. 14. and encourageth himself to hope that it would be comfortable to him, ver. 15. This chapter is proper for funeral solemnities, and serious meditations on it, will help us both to get good by the death of others, and to get ready for our own.*

1. **M**AN that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. 2. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. 3. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? 4. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. 5. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. 6. Turn from him, that he may rest till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.

We are here led to think,

1. Of the original of human life: God is indeed its great original, for he *breathed into man the breath of life*, and in him we live; but we date it from our birth, and thence we must date both its frailty and its pollution. (1.) Its frailty, *man that is born*



*born of a woman* is therefore of few days, *ver. 1.* It may refer to the first woman, who was called Eve, because she was the mother of all living: of her, who being deceived by the tempter, was first in the transgression, we are all born, and consequently derive from her that sin and corruption which both shortens our days and saddens them. Or it may refer to every man's immediate mother. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we know that *partus sequitur ventrem*, the child takes after the mother; let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, or in the strength of his father, but remember that he is born of a woman, and that when God pleaseth the *mighty men become as women*, Jer. li. 30. (2.) Its pollution, *ver. 4.* *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* If man be born of a woman that is a sinner, how can it be otherwise but that he should be a sinner? See *chap. xxv. 4.* *How can he be clean that is born of a woman?* Clean children cannot come from unclean parents, no more than pure streams from an impure spring, or grapes from thorns. Our habitual corruption is derived with our nature from our parents, and is therefore bred in the bone: our blood is not only attainted by a legal conviction, but tainted with an hereditary disease. Our Lord Jesus being made sin for us, is said to be *made of a woman*, Gal. iv. 4.

2. Of the nature of human life. It is a flower, it is a shadow, *ver. 2.* The flower is fading, and all its beauty soon withers and is gone. The shadow is fleeting, and its very being will soon be lost and drowned in the shadows of the night: of neither do we make any account, in neither do we put any confidence.

3. Of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. Man is of few days. Life is computed not by months or years but by days, for we cannot be sure of any day but that it may be our last: these days are few, fewer than we think of; few at the most in comparison with the days of the first patriarchs, much more in comparison with the days of eternity; but much fewer to most who come short of what we call the age of man. Man sometimes no sooner comes forth, but he is cut down, comes forth out of the womb, but he dies in the cradle, comes forth into the world and enters into the business of it, but is hurried away as soon as he has laid his hand to the plough. If not cut down immediately yet fleeing as a shadow, that never continues in one stay, in one shape, but the fashion of it passeth away: so doth this world, and our life in it, 1 *Cor. vii. 31.*

4. Of the calamitous state of human life: man as he is short-lived, so he is sad-lived. Tho' he had but a few days to spend here, yet if he might rejoice in those few it were well enough, a short life and a merry is the boast of some, but it is not so, during these few days he is full of trouble, not only troubled but full of trouble, full of commotion, so the word is, either toiling or fretting, grieving or fearing: no day passeth without some vexation, some hurry, some disorder or other. He has his belly-full of trouble: they that are fond of the world shall have enough of it. He is *satur tremore*. The fewness of his days creates him a continual trouble and uneasiness in expectation of the period of them, and he always hangs in doubt of his life. Yet since man's days are so full of trouble it is well they are few, that the soul's imprisonment in the body, and banishment from the Lord is not perpetual, is not long. When we come to heaven, our days will be many and perfectly free from trouble, and in the mean time faith, hope, and love balance the present grievances.

5. Of the sinfulness of human life, arising from the sinfulness of the human nature. So some understand that question, *ver. 4.* *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* A clean performance from an unclean principle. Note, Actual transgressions are the natural product of habitual corruption; which is therefore called original sin, because it is the original of all our sins. This holy Job here laments, as all that are sanctified do, running up the streams to the fountain, (*Psal. li. 5.*) and some think he intends it as a plea with God for compassion, Lord be not extreme to mark my sins of human frailty and infirmity, for thou knowest my weakness, *O remember that I am flesh*. The Chaldee paraphrase has an observable reading of this verse: *who can make a man clean that is polluted with sin? Cannot one? that is God: or who but God who is one, and will spare him?* God by his almighty grace can change the skin of the Ethiopian, the skin of Job, tho' clothed with worms.

6. Of the settled period of human life, *ver. 5.* We are here assured, (1.) That our life will come to an end; our days upon earth are not numberless, are not endless, no, they are numbred, and will soon be finished, *Dan. v. 26.* (2.) That it is determined in the counsel and decree of God, how long we shall live, and when we shall die. The number of our months is with God, at the dispose of his power, which cannot be controlled, and under the ken of his omniscience, which cannot be deceived. It is certain, God's providence has the ordering of the period of our lives, our times are in his hand, the powers of nature depend upon him, and act under him: in him we live and move, diseases are his servants, he kills and makes alive, nothing comes to pass by chance, no not the execution done by a bow drawn at a venture: it is therefore certain God's prescience has determined it before, for known unto God are all his works. Whatever he doth he determined, yet with a regard partly to fly to the settled course of nature, the end and the means are determined together; and to

the settled rules of moral government, punishing evil, and rewarding good in this life, we are no more governed by the Stoicks' blind fate than by the Epicurean's blind fortune. (3.) That the bounds God has fixed we cannot pass, for his counsels are unalterable, his foresight being infallible.

These considerations Job here urgeth as reasons,

1. Why God should not be so strict in taking cognizance of him, and of his slips and failings. *ver. 3.* Having such a corrupt nature within, and being liable to so much trouble, which is a constant temptation from without, dost thou open thine eyes and fasten them upon such a one, extremely to mark what I do amiss? *chap. xiii. 27.* and dost thou bring me, such a worthless worm as I am, into judgment with thee who art so quick-sighted to discover the least failing, so holy to hate it, so just to condemn it, and so mighty to punish it? The consideration of our own inability to contend with God, of our own sinfulness and weakness, should engage us to pray, *Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant.*

2. Why he should not be so severe in his dealings with him. Lord, I have but a little time to live, and must certainly and shortly go hence, and the few days I have to spend here are at the best full of trouble. O let me have a little respite, *ver. 6.* Turn from plaguing a poor creature thus, and let him rest a while, allow him some breathing time, *until he shall accomplish as a hireling his day.* It is appointed to me once to die, let that one day suffice me, and let me not thus be continually dying, dying a thousand deaths. Let it suffice that my life at best is *as the day of an hireling*, a day of toil and labour, I am content to accomplish that, and will make the best of the common hardships of human life, the burthen and heat of the day, but let me not feel those uncommon tortures, let not my life be as the day of a malefactor, all execution-day. Thus may we find some relief under great troubles, by recommending ourselves to the compassion of that God who knows our frame, and will consider it, and our being out of frame too.

7. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. 8. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground: 9. Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. 10. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? 11. As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: 12. So man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. 13. O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me! 14. If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till thy change come. 15. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

We have seen what Job has to say concerning life, let us now see what he has to say concerning death, which his thoughts were very much conversant with now he was sick and sore. It is not unseasonable when we are in health to think of dying, but it is an inexcusable incogitancy, if when we are already taken into the custody of death's messengers, we look upon it as a thing at a distance. Job had already shewed that death will come, and that its hour is already fixed. Now here he shews,

1. That death is a removal for good and all out of this world. This he had spoken of before, *chap. vii. 9, 10.* and now he mentions it again; for tho' it be a truth that needs not be proved, yet it needs to be much considered, that it may be duly improved.

(1.) A man cut down by death will not revive again, as a tree cut down will. What hope there is of a tree he shews very elegantly, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* If the body of a tree be cut down, and only the stem or stump left in the ground, tho' it seem dead and dry, yet it will shoot out young boughs again, as if it were but newly planted. The moisture of the earth and the rain of heaven are as it were scented and perceived by the stump of a tree, and they have an influence upon it to revive it; but the dead body of a man would not perceive them, nor be in the least affected by them. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, when his being deprived of the use of his reason was signified by the cutting down of a tree, his return to it again was signified by the leaving of the stump in the earth with a band of iron and brass to be *wet with the dew of heaven*, *Dan. iv. 15.* But man has no such prospect of a return to life. The vegetable life is a cheap and easy thing, the scent of water will recover it, the animal life in some insects and fowls is so, the heat of the sun retrieves it, but the rational soul when once retired is too great, too noble a thing to be recalled by any of the powers of nature, it is out of the reach of sun or rain, and cannot be restored but by the immediate operations of omnipotence itself: for, *ver. 10.* *Man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost and where is he?* Two words are here used for man. Geber, a mighty man, tho' mighty dies; Adam, a man



a man of the earth, because earthy, gives up the ghost. Note, Man is a dying creature: he is here described by what occurs (1.) Before death, he wasteth away, he is continually wasting, dying daily, spending upon the quick stock of life; sickness and old age are wasting things to the flesh, the strength, the beauty. (2.) In death, he giveth up the ghost, the soul leaves the body and returns to God who gave it, the Father of spirits. (3.) After death, where is he? he is not where he was, his place knows him no more: but, is he no where? So some read it: yes, he is somewhere, and it is a very awful consideration to think where they are that have given up the ghost, and where we shall be when we give it up. It is gone to the world of spirits, gone in to eternity, gone to return no more to this world.

(2.) A man laid down in the grave will not rise up again. *ver. 11, 12.* Every night we lie down to sleep, and in the morning we awake and rise again, but at death we must lie down in the grave, not to awake or rise again to such a world, such a state as we are now in, never to awake or arise until the heavens, the faithful measures of time, shall be no more, and consequently time it self shall come to an end, and be swallowed up in eternity: so that the life of man may fitly be compared to the waters of a land-flood, which spread far and make a great shew, but they are shallow, and when they are cut off from the sea or river, the swelling and overflowing of which was the cause of them, they soon decay and dry up, and their place knows them no more. The waters of life are soon exhaled, and disappear; the body, like some of those waters, sinks and soaks into the earth, and is buried there; the soul, like others of them, is drawn upwards to mingle with the waters above the firmament. The learned Sir Richard Blackmore makes this also to be a dissimilitude: if the waters decay and be dried up in the summer, yet they will return again in the winter, but it is not so with the life of man. Take part of his paraphrase in his own words.

*A flowing river or a standing lake  
May their dry banks and naked shoars forsake,  
Their waters may exhale and upwards move,  
Their channel leave to roll in clouds above;  
But the returning winter will restore  
What in the summer they had lost before:  
But if, O man, thy vital streams desert  
Their purple channels, and defraud the heart,  
With fresh recruits they ne'er will be supply'd,  
Nor seal their leaping life's returning tide.*

2. That yet there will be a return of man to life again in another world, at the end of time, when *the heavens are no more*. Then *they shall awake and be raised out of their sleep*. The resurrection of the dead was doubtless an article of Job's creed, as appears *chap. xix. 26.* and to that it should seem he has an eye here; where in the belief of that we have three things:

1. A humble petition for a hiding place in the grave, *ver. 13.* It was not only in a passionate weariness of this life that he wished to die, but in a pious assurance of a better life, to which at length he should arise. *O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!* The grave is not only a resting-place but a hiding-place to the people of God; God has the key of the grave, to let in now, and to let out at the resurrection: He *hides men in the grave*, as we hide our treasure in a place of secrecy and safety, and he that hides will find, and nothing shall be lost. *O that thou wouldst hide me not only from the storms and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life: let me lie in the grave reserved for immortality, in secret from all the world, but not from thee, not from those eyes which saw my substance when first curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth,* *Psal. cxxxix. 15, 16.* There let me lie (1.) *Until thy wrath be past.* As long as the bodies of the saints lie in the grave, so long there are some remains of that wrath which they were by nature children of, so long they are under some of the efforts of sin: but when the body is raised, it is wholly past, death, the last enemy, will then be totally destroyed. (2.) *Until the set time comes for my being remembered, as Noah was remembered in the ark, (Gen. viii. 1.) where God hid him not only from the destruction of the old world, but for the reparation of a new world.* The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave, there is a time appointed, a time set, for their being enquired after. We cannot be sure that we shall look through the darkness of our present troubles, and see good days after them in this world, but if we can but get well to the grave, we may with an eye of faith look through the darkness of that, as Job here, and see better days on the other side it, in a better world.

2. A holy resolution patiently to attend the will of God both in his death and in his resurrection, *ver. 14.* *If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come.* Job's friends proving miserable comforters, he set himself to be the more his own comforter: his case was now bad, but he pleaseth himself with the expectation of a change: I think it cannot be meant of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. His friends indeed flattered him with the hopes of that, but he himself all along despaired of it. Comforts founded upon uncertainties, at best must needs be uncertain

comforts; and therefore no doubt it is something more sure than that which he here bears up himself with the expectation of. The change he waits for must therefore be understood either (1.) Of the change of the resurrection, when the vile body shall be changed, *Phil. iii. 21.* and a great one and glorious change it will be; and then that question, *if a man die, shall he live again?* must be taken by way of admiration: strange! shall these dry bones live? if so, all the time appointed for the continuance of the separation between soul and body, my separate soul shall wait until that change comes, when it shall be united again to the body, *and my flesh also shall rest in hope,* *Psal. xvi. 9.* Or, (2.) Of the change at death. *If a man die, shall he live again?* no, not such a life as he now lives, and therefore I will patiently wait until that change comes which will put a period to my calamities, and not impatiently wish for the anticipation of it as I have done. Observe here, 1. That it is a serious thing to die, it is a work by it self. It is a change, there is a visible change in the body, its appearance altered, its actions brought to an end, but a greater change with the soul, which quits the body, and removes to the world of spirits, finisheth its state of probation, and enters upon that of retribution. This change will come, and it will be a final change, not like the transmutations of the elements, which return to their former state: No, we must die, not thus to live again. It is but once to die, and that had need be well done that is to be done but once. An error here is fatal, conclusive, and not again to be rectified. 2. That therefore it is the duty of every one of us to wait for that change, and to continue waiting all the days of our appointed time. The time of life is an appointed time, that time is to be reckoned by days, and those days are to be spent in waiting for our change. That is, (1.) We must expect that it will come, and think much of it. (2.) We must desire that it would come, as those that long to be with Christ. (3.) We must be willing to tarry until it doth come, as those that believe God's time to be the best. (4.) We must give diligence to get ready against it comes, that it may be a blessed change to us.

3. A joyful expectation of bliss and satisfaction in this, *ver. 15.* Then *thou shalt call, and I will answer thee.* Now he was under such a cloud that he could not, he durst not, answer, *chap. ix. 15, 35.—xiii. 22.* but he comforted himself with this, that there would come a time when God would call, and he should answer: then, *i. e.* 1. At the resurrection, thou shalt call me out of the grave, by the voice of the archangel, and I will answer and come at the call. The body is the *work of God's hands*, and he will have a desire to that, having prepared a glory for it. Or, 2. At death. Thou shalt call my body to the grave, and my soul to thy self, and I will answer, ready, Lord, ready, coming, coming; here I am. Gracious souls can cheerfully answer death's summons and appear to his writ. Their spirits are not forcibly required from them, as *Luk. xii. 20.* but willingly resigned by them, and the earthly tabernacle not violently pulled down, but voluntarily laid down: with this assurance thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands, thou hast mercy in store for me, not only as made by thy providence, but new made by thy grace, otherwise *he that made them will not save them.* Note, Grace in the soul is the work of God's own hands, and therefore he will not forsake it in this world, *Psal. cxxxviii. 8.* but will have a desire to it, to perfect it in the other, and to crown it with endless glory.

16. For now thou numbrest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin? 17. My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity. 18. And surely the mountain falling, cometh to nought: and the rock is removed out of his place. 19. The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth, and thou destroyest the hope of man. 20. Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changeest his countenance, and sendest him away. 21. His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them. 22. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.

Job here returns to his complaints, and tho' he is not without hope of future bliss he finds it very hard to get over his present grievances.

1. He complains of the particular hardships he apprehended himself under from the strictness of God's justice, *ver. 16, 17.* Therefore he longed to go hence to that world where God's wrath will be past, because now he was under the continual tokens of it, as a child under the severe discipline of the rod longs to be of age: when shall my change come? for now thou seemest to me to number my steps, and watch over my sin, and seal it up in a bag, as bills of indictment are kept safe to be produced against the prisoner. See *Deut. xxxii. 34.* Thou takest all advantages against me, old scores are called over, every infirmity is animadverted upon, and no sooner is a false step taken but I am beaten for it. Now (1.) Job doth right to the divine justice in



in owning that he smarted for his sins and transgressions, that he had done enough to deserve all that was laid upon him; for there was sin in all his steps, and he was guilty of transgression enough to bring all this ruin upon him, if it were strictly enquired into: he is far from saying that he perisheth being innocent. But (2.) He doth wrong to the divine goodness, in suggesting that God was extreme to mark what he did amiss, and made the worst of every thing: he spoke to this purpose, *chap. xiii. 27.* It was unadvisedly said, and therefore we will not dwell too much upon it. God doth indeed see all our sins, he sees sin in his own people, but he is not severe in reckoning with us; nor is the law ever stretched against us, but we are punished less than our iniquities deserve. The transgression of the impenitent God doth indeed seal and sow up against the day of wrath, but the sins of his people he blots out as a cloud.

2. He complains of the wasting condition of mankind in general: we live in a dying world; *who knows the power of God's anger: by which we are consumed and troubled, and in which all our days are passed away.* See *Psal. xc. 7, 8, 9, 11.* And who can bear up against his rebukes! *Psal. xxxix. 11.*

(1.) We see the decays of the earth it self. (1.) Of the strongest parts of it, *ver. 18.* Nothing will last always, for we see even mountains moulder, and come to nought, they wither, and fall as a leaf, rocks wax old and pass away by the continual beating of the sea against them. *The waters wear the stones with constant dropping, non vi, sed sæpe cadendo.* On this earth every thing is the worse for the wearing: (*Tempus edax rerum*) It is not so with the heavenly bodies. (2.) Of the natural products of it: the things which grow out of the earth, and seem to be firmly rooted in it, are sometimes by an excess of rain washed away, *ver. 19.* Some think he pleads this for relief, Lord, my patience will not hold out always, even rocks and mountains will fail at last, therefore cease the controversy.

(2.) No marvel if we then see the decays of man upon the earth, for he is of the earth earthy. Job begins to think his case is not singular, and therefore he ought to reconcile himself to the common lot.

We perceive by many instances,

1. How vain it is to expect much from the enjoyments of life: *Thou destroyest the hope of man, i. e.* puttest an end to all the projects he had framed, and all the prospects of satisfaction he had flattered himself with. Death will be the destruction of all those hopes which are built upon worldly confidences, and confined to worldly comforts: hope in Christ, and hope in heaven, death will consummate, and not destroy.

2. How vain it is to struggle against the assaults of death. *ver. 20. Thou prevailest for ever against him.* Note, 1. Man is an unequal match for God: whom God contends with he will certainly prevail against, prevail for ever against, so that they shall never be able to make head again. 2. The stroke of death is irresistible: it is to no purpose to dispute its summons, God prevails against man and he passeth, passeth away, and lo he is not. Look upon a dying man and see,

1. How his looks are altered. Thou changeest his countenance two ways. (1.) By the disease of his body. When a man has been a few days sick, what a change is there in his countenance! much more when he has been a few minutes dead! the countenance that was majestick and awful becomes mean and despicable; that was lovely and amiable becomes ghastly and frightful: bury my dead out my sight. Where then is the admired beauty? death changeth the countenance and then sends us away out of this world, gives us one dismissal hence never to return. (2.) By the discomposure of his mind. Note, The approach of death will make the strongest and stoutest to change countenance, it will make the most merry smiling countenance to look grave and serious, and the most bold daring countenance to look pale and timorous.

2. How little he is concerned in the affairs of his family, which when time was lay so near his heart: when he is in the hands of the harbingers of death, suppose struck with a palsy or apoplexy, or delirious in a fever, or in conflict with death, tell him then never so good news concerning his children, or never so bad, it is all alike, he knows it not, he perceives it not, *ver. 21.* He is going to that world where he will be a perfect stranger to all those things which here filled and affected him: the consideration of this should moderate our cares concerning our children and families. God will know what comes of them when we are gone, to him therefore let us commit them, with him let us leave them, and not burthen our selves with needless, fruitless cares concerning them.

3. How dreadful the agonies of death are, *ver. 22. While his flesh is upon him* (so it may be read) the body is so loth to lay down, *he shall have pain; and while his soul is within him,* the spirit he is so loth to resign, it shall mourn. Note, Dying work is hard work, dying pangs are commonly fore pangs. It is folly therefore for men to defer their repentance to a death-bed, and to have that to do which is the one thing needful, when they are really unfit to do any thing: but it is true wisdom by making our peace with God in Christ, and keeping a good conscience to treasure up comforts which will support and relieve us against the pains and sorrows of a dying hour.

## CHAP. XV.

Perhaps Job was so clear, and so well satisfied in the goodness of his own cause; that he thought if he had not convinced, yet he had at least silenced all his three friends; but, it seems, he had not, at this chapter they begin a second attack upon him, each of them charging him afresh with as much vehemence as before. It is natural to us to be fond of our own sentiments, and therefore to be firm to them, and hardly to be brought to recede from them. Eliphaz here sticks close to the principles upon which he had condemned Job, and (1.) He reproves him for justifying himself, and fathers on him many ill things which are unfairly inferred from thence, *ver. 2—13.* (2.) He persuades him to humble himself before God, and to take shame to himself. *ver. 14—16.* (3.) He reads him a long lecture concerning the woful estate of wicked people, that harden their hearts against God, and the judgments that are prepared for them, *ver. 17—35.* A good use may be made both of his reproofs, for they are plain, and of his doctrine, for it is sound, tho' both the one and the other are misapplied to Job.

1. **T**HEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said, 2. Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east-wind? 3. Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? 4. Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God. 5. For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou choolest the tongue of the crafty. 6. Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee. 7. Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills? 8. Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? 9. What knowest thou that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us? 10. With us are both the grey-headed, and very aged men, much elder than thy father. 11. Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee? 12. Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what do thine eyes wink at, 13. That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such words go out of thy mouth? 14. What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15. Behold, he putteth no trust in his fairs; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. 16. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

Eliphaz here falls very foul upon Job, because he contradicted what he and his colleagues had said, and did not acquiesce in it, and applaud it as they expected. Proud people are apt thus to take it very heinously if they may not have leave to dictate and give law to all about them, and to run upon those as ignorant and obstinate, and all that is nought, that cannot in every thing say as they say.

Several great crimes Eliphaz here chargeth Job with, only because he would not own himself an hypocrite.

1. He charges him with folly and absurdity, *ver. 2, 3.* That whereas he had been reputed a wise man, he had now quite forfeited his reputation, any one would say that his wisdom was departed from him, he talked so extravagantly, and so little to the purpose. Bildad began thus, *chap. viii. 2.* and Zophar, *chap. xi. 2, 3.* It is common for angry disputants thus to represent one another's reasonings as impertinent and ridiculous, more than there is cause, forgetting the doom of him that calls his brother Raca, and thou fool. It is true, (1.) That there is in the world a great deal of vain knowledge, science falsely so called, that is useless, and therefore worthless. (2.) That this is the knowledge that puffeth up, with which men fill their bellies, and swell in a fond conceit of their own accomplishments. (3.) That whatever vain knowledge a man may have in his head, if he would be thought a wise man he must not utter it, but let it die with himself as it deserves. (4.) Unprofitable talk is evil talk: we must give an account in the great day not only for wicked words but for idle words. Speeches therefore which do no good, which do no service either to God or our neighbour, or no justice to our selves, which are no way to the use of edifying, were better unspoken. Such words are as wind, light and empty, especially that are as the east-wind, hurtful and pernicious, it will be ill filling either our selves or others with, for they will pass very ill in the account. (5.) Vain knowledge and unprofitable talk ought to be reprov'd and checked, especially in a wise man, whom it worst becomes, and who doth most hurt by the ill example of it.

2. He charges him with impiety and irreligion, *ver. 4. Thou castest off fear, i. e.* the fear of God, and that regard to him which



which thou shouldst have, and then restrainest prayer. See what religion is summed up in, fearing God and praying to him. The former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected; and those that live without prayer, certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer, it is a sign they cast off fear. Surely those have no reverence of God's majesty, no dread of his wrath, and are in no care about their souls and eternity, who make no applications to God for his grace. Those that are prayerless are fearless and graceless. When the fear of God is cast off, all sin is let in, and a door open to all manner of profaneness. It is especially bad with those who have had some fear of God, but now they have cast it off, have been frequent in prayer, but now they restrain it. How are they fallen! how is their first love lost! It notes a kind of force put upon themselves. The fear of God should stick to them, but they throw it off, prayer would be uttered, but they restrain it, and in both baffle their convictions. Those that either omit prayer, or straiten and abridge themselves in it, quenching the spirit of adoption, and denying themselves the liberty they might take in the duty, restrain prayer: This is bad enough, but it is worse to restrain others from prayer, to prohibit and discourage prayer, as Darius, *Dan.* vi. 7.

Now Eliphaz charges this upon Job either (1.) As that which was his own practice. He thought Job talked of God with such liberty as if he had been hail fellow with him, charged him so high with hard usage of him, and challenged him so oft to a fair trial, that he had quite thrown off all religious regard to him: This charge was utterly false, and yet wanted not some colour. We ought not only to take care, that we keep up prayer and the fear of God, but that we never drop any unwary expressions which may give occasion to those who seek occasion to question our sincerity and constancy in religion. Or, (2.) As that which others would infer from the doctrine he maintained. If this be true (thinks Eliphaz) which Job saith, that a man may be thus sorely afflicted, and yet be a good man, then farewell all religion, farewell prayer and the fear of God: If all things come alike to all, and the best men may have the worst treatment in this world, every one will be ready to say, *It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it to keep his ordinances?* *Mal.* iii. 14. *Verily I have cleansed my hands in vain,* *Psal.* lxxiii. 13, 14. Who will be honest, if the tabernacles of robbers prosper? *chap.* xii. 6. If there be no forgiveness with God (*chap.* vii. 21.) who will fear him? *Psal.* cxxx. 4. If he laugh at the trial of the innocent, *chap.* ix. 23. If he be so difficult of access, *chap.* ix. 32. who will pray to him? Note, It is a piece of injustice which even wise and good men are too often guilty of in the heat of disputation, to charge upon their adversaries those consequences of their opinions which are not fairly drawn from them, and which really they abhor. This is not doing as we would be done by.

Upon this strained innuendo Eliphaz grounds that high charge of impiety, *ver.* 5. *Thy mouth utters thine iniquity*, teaches it, so the word is. Thou teachest others to have the same hard thoughts of God and religion that thou thyself hast. It is bad to break even the least of the commandments, but worse to teach men so, *Mat.* v. 19. If we ever thought evil, let us lay our hand upon our mouth to suppress the evil thought, *Prov.* xxx. 32. and let us by no means utter it, that is putting an *imprimatur* to it, publishing it with allowance, to the dishonour of God, and the damage of others. Observe, when men have cast off fear and prayer, their mouth utters iniquity. They that cease to do good, soon learn to do ill. What can we expect but all manner of iniquity from those that arm not themselves with the grace of God against it? But, *thou chusest the tongue of the crafty, i. e.* Thou utterest thine iniquity with some shew and pretence of piety, mixing some good words with the bad, as hucksters do with their wares, to help them off. The mouth of iniquity could not do so much mischief as it doth without the tongue of the crafty. The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, *Rom.* xvi. 18. The tongue of the crafty speaks with design and deliberation, and therefore they that use it may be said to chuse it, as that which will serve their purpose better than the tongue of the upright: But it will be found at last, that honesty is the best policy.

Eliphaz in his first discourse, had proceeded against Job upon meer surmise, *chap.* iv. 6, 7. But now he has got proof against him from his own discourses, *ver.* 6. *Thine own mouth condemns thee, and not I*: But then he should have considered that he and his fellows had provoked him to say that which now they took advantage of; and that was not fair. Those are most effectually condemned that are condemned by themselves, *Tit.* iii. 11. *Luke* xix. 22. Many a man needs no more to sink him, than for his own tongue to fall upon him.

3. He chargeth him with intolerable arrogancy and self-conceit. It was a just, and reasonable, and modest demand Job had made, *chap.* ix. 3. Allow that I have understanding as well as you, but see how they seek occasion against him: That is misconstrued, as if he pretended to be wiser than any man. Because he will not grant to them, they will have it thought that he claims to himself the monopoly of wisdom, *ver.* 7, 8, 9. As if he thought he had the advantage of all mankind (1.) In length of acquaintance with the world, which furnisheth men with so much

the more experience. *Art thou the first man that was born?* and consequently senior to us, and better able to give the sense of antiquity, and the judgment of the first and earliest, the wisest and purest, ages? *Art thou prior to Adam?* so it may be read. Did not he suffer for sin, and yet wilt not thou, who art so great a sufferer, own thyself a sinner? *Wast thou made before the hills,* as wisdom her self was? *Prov.* viii. 23, &c. Must God's counsels which are as the great mountains, *Psal.* xxxvi. 6. and immoveable as the everlasting hills, be subsequent to thy notions, and truckle to them? Dost thou know more of the world than any of us do? No, thou art but of yesterday, no more than we, *chap.* v. 9. Or, (2.) In intimacy of acquaintance with God, *ver.* 8. *Hast thou heard the secret of God?* Dost thou pretend to be of the cabinet council of heaven, that thou canst give better reasons than others can for God's proceedings? There are secret things of God which belong not to us, and which therefore we must not pretend to account for: Those are daringly presumptuous that do. He also represents him (1.) As assuming to himself such knowledge as none else had. *Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?* as if none were wise but thou. Job had said, *chap.* xiii. 2. *What ye know, the same do I know also*, and now they return upon him according to the usage of eager disputants, who think they have a privilege to commend themselves: *What knowest thou that we know not?* How natural are such replies as these in the heat of argument? but how simple do they look afterwards upon the review? (2.) As opposing the stream of antiquity, a venerable name which all contending parties strive to shelter themselves under the umbrage of. *With us are the grey-headed, and very aged men,* *ver.* 10. We have the fathers on our side, all the antient doctors of the church are of our opinion. A thing soon said, but not so soon proved, and when proved, truth is not so soon discovered and proved by it, as most people imagine. David preferred right scripture knowledge before that of antiquity, *Psal.* cxix. 100. *I understand more than the antients, because I keep thy precepts.* Or perhaps one or more, if not all three of these friends of Job, were elder than he, *chap.* xxxii. 6. and therefore they thought he was bound to acknowledge them to be in the right. And this also serves contenders to make a noise with to very little purpose. If they are elder than their adversaries, and can say they knew such a thing before they were born, it will serve them to bounce and hector with, whereas the eldest are not always the wisest, *chap.* xxxii. 9.

4. He chargeth him with a contempt of the counsels and comforts that were given him by his friends, *ver.* 11. *Are the consolations of God small with thee?* (1.) Eliphaz takes it ill that Job did not value the comforts, which he and his friends administered to him more than it seems he did; and did not welcome every word they said as gospel. It is true, they had said some very good things, but in their application to Job they were miserable comforters. Note, We are apt to think that great and considerable which we ourselves say, when others perhaps with good reason think it small and trifling. Paul found that those who seemed to be somewhat, yet in conference added nothing to him, *Gal.* ii. 6. (2.) He represents this as a slight put upon divine consolations in general, as if they were of small account with him, whereas really they were not: If he had not highly valued them, he could not have born up as he did under his sufferings. Note, 1. The consolations of God are not in themselves small. Divine comforts are great things, *i. e.* The comfort which is from God, especially the comfort which is in God. 2. The consolations of God not being small in themselves, it is very ill if they be small with us. It is a great affront to God, and an evidence of a degenerate, depraved mind to disesteem and undervalue spiritual delights, and despise the pleasant land. What, (saith Eliphaz) is there any secret thing with thee? Hast thou some cordial to support thyself with, that is a Proprium, an Arcanum, that no body else can pretend to, or knows any thing of? Or, Is there some secret sin harboured and indulged in thy bosom, which hinders the operation of divine comforts? None disesteem divine comforts but those that secretly affect the world and the flesh.

5. He chargeth him with opposition to God himself, and to religion, *ver.* 12, 13. *Why doth thine heart carry thee away into such indecent, irreligious expressions?* Note, Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, *Jam.* i. 14. If we fly off from God and our duty, or fly out into any thing amiss, it is our own heart that carries us away. *If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* And there is a violence, an impetus in the by-turnings of the soul, the corrupt heart carries men away as it were by force, against their convictions. What is it that thine eyes wink at! Why so careless and mindless of what is said to thee, hearing it as if thou wert half asleep? Why so scornful, disdainful what we say, as if it were below thee to take notice of it? What have we said that deserves to be thus slighted? Nay, *that thou turnest thy spirit against God.* It was bad that his heart was carried away from God, but much worse, that it was turned against God: But they that forsake God will soon break out in open enmity to him. But how did this appear? Why, thou lettest such words go out of thy mouth, reflecting on God, and his justice and goodness. It is the character of the wicked, that they set their mouth against the heavens, *Psal.* lxxiii. 9. which is a certain indication that the spirit is turned against God. He thought



Job's spirit was soured against God, and so turned from what it had been, and exasperated at his dealings with him. Eliphaz wanted candour and charity, else he would not have put such a harsh construction upon the speeches of one that had such a settled reputation for piety, and was now in temptation: This was in effect to give the cause on Satan's side, and to own that Job had done as he said he would, *curse God to his face*.

6. He chargeth him with justifying himself to that degree, as even to deny his share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature, *ver. 14. What is man that he should be clean?* i. e. that he should pretend to be so, or that any should expect to find him so: What is he that is born of a woman, a sinful woman, that he should be righteous? Note, 1. Righteousness is cleanness, it makes us acceptable to God, and easy to our selves, *Psal. xviii. 24.* 2. Man in his fallen state cannot pretend to be clean and righteous before God, either to acquit himself to God's justice, or recommend himself to his favour. 3. He is therefore to be adjudged unclean and unrighteous, because born of a woman, from whom he derives a corrupt nature, which is both his guilt and his pollution. With these plain truths Eliphaz thinks to convince Job, whereas he had just now said the same, *chap. xiv. 4. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* But doth it therefore follow, that Job is an hypocrite, and a wicked man, which was all that he denied? By no means. Tho' man as born of a woman is not clean, yet as born again of the Spirit he is.

Further to evince this, he here shews,

1. That the brightest creatures are imperfect and impure before God, *ver. 15.* God placeth no confidence in saints and angels, he employs both, but trusts neither with his service, without giving them fresh supplies of strength and wisdom for it, as knowing they are not sufficient of themselves, neither more nor better than his grace makes them. He takes no complacency in the heavens themselves. How pure soever they seem to us in his eye, they have many a speck, and many a flaw: *The heavens are not clean in his sight.* If the stars (saith Mr Caryl) have no light in the sight of the sun, what light has the sun in the sight of God! See *Isa. xxiv. 23.*

2. That man is much more so, *ver. 16. How much more abominable and filthy is man!* If saints are not to be trusted, much less sinners. If the heavens are not pure, which are as God made them, much less man that is degenerated: Nay, he is abominable and filthy in the sight of God, and if ever he repent, he is so in his own sight, and therefore he abhors himself. Sin is an odious thing, it makes men hateful. The body of sin is so, and is therefore called a dead body, a loathsome thing. Is it not a filthy thing, and enough to turn one's stomach, to see a man swill swine-meat, or some stinking nasty stuff? Such is the filthiness of man, that he drinks iniquity (that abominable thing which the Lord hates) as greedily, and with as much pleasure, as a man drinks water when he is thirsty. It is his constant drink; it is natural to sinners to commit iniquity. It gratifies, but doth not satisfy the appetites of the old man. It is like water to a man in a drop: The more men sin, the more they would sin.

17. I will shew thee, hear me, and that *which I have seen*, I will declare, 18. Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it: 19. Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them. 20. The wicked man travellet with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. 21. A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. 22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword. 23. He wandreth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. 24. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. 25. For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengthneth himself against the Almighty. 26. He runneth upon him, *even on his neck*, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers: 27. Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on his flanks. 28. And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps. 29. He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth. 30. He shall not depart out of darkness, the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away. 31. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity: for vanity shall be his recompence. 32. It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green. 33. He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive. 34. For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. 35. They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit.

Eliphaz having reprov'd Job for his answers, here comes to maintain his own thesis, upon which he built his censure of Job. His opinion is, that those that are wicked are certainly miserable: From whence he would infer, that those that are miserable are certainly wicked, and therefore Job was so.

Observe (1.) His solemn preface to this discourse, in which he bespeaks Job's attention, which he had little reason to expect, he having given so little heed to, and put so little value upon what Job had said. *Ver. 17.* I will shew thee that which is worth hearing, and not reason as thou dost with unprofitable talk. Thus apt are men, when they condemn others reasonings, to commend their own. He promiseth to teach him (1.) From his own experience and observation: That which I have myself seen in divers instances, I will declare. 'It is of good use to take notice of the providences of God concerning the children of men, from which many a good lesson may be learned. What good observations we have made, and have found benefit by our selves, we should be ready to communicate for the benefit of others: And we may then speak boldly, when we declare what we have seen.' (2.) From the wisdom of the antients, *ver. 18. which wise men have told from their fathers.* Note, The wisdom and learning of the moderns is very much derived from that of the antients. Good children will learn a great deal from their good parents: And what we have learned from our ancestors we must transmit to our posterity, and not hide from the generations to come. See *Psal. lxxviii. 3, 4, 5, 6.* If the thread of the knowledge of many ages be cut off by the carelessness of one, and nothing be done to preserve it pure and entire, all that succeed fare the worse. The authorities Eliphaz voucheth were authorities indeed, men of rank and figure, *ver. 19. unto whom alone the earth was given*, and therefore you may suppose them favourites of heaven, and best capable of making observations concerning the affairs of this earth. The dictates of wisdom come with advantage from those that are in places of dignity and power, as Solomon's, yet there is a wisdom *which none of the princes of this world knew*, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

(2.) The discourse it self. He here aims to shew,

(1.) That those who are wise and good, do ordinarily prosper in this world. This he only hints at, *ver. 19.* That those of whose mind he was, were such as had the earth given to them, and to them only, they enjoyed it entirely and peaceably, and no stranger passed among them, either to share with them, or give disturbance to them. Job had said, *The earth is given into the hand of the wicked*, *chap. ix. 24.* No, saith Eliphaz, it is given into the hands of the saints, and runs along with the faith committed unto them. And they are not robbed and plundered by strangers and enemies making inroads upon them, as thou art by the Sabeans and Chaldeans. But because many of God's people have remarkably prospered in this world, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it doth not therefore follow, that those who are crossed and impoverished as Job, are not God's people.

(2.) That wicked people, and particularly oppressors, and tyrannizing rulers, are subject to continual terrors, live very uncomfortably, and perish very miserably. On this head he enlargeth, shewing that even they who impiously dare God's judgments, yet cannot but dread them, and will feel them at last: He speaks in the singular number, the wicked man, some think meaning Nimrod, or perhaps Chedorloamer, or some such mighty hunter before the Lord: I wish he doth not mean Job himself, whom he expressly chargeth both with the tyranny and with the timorousness here described, *chap. xxii. 9. 10.* Here he thinks the application easy, and that Job might, in this description, as in a glass, see his own face. Now,

1. Let us see how he describes the sinner who lives thus miserably. He doth not begin with that, but brings it in as a reason of his doom, *ver. 25—28.* It is no ordinary sinner, but one of the first rate, an oppressor, *ver. 20. a blasphemer and a persecutor*, one that *neither fears God, nor regards man.*

1. He bids defiance to God, and to his authority and power, *ver. 25.* Tell him of the divine law, and the obligations of it, he breaks those bonds asunder, and will not have, no not him that made him to restrain him, or rule over him. Tell him of the divine wrath, and the terrors of that, he bids the Almighty do his worst, he will have his will, he will have his way, in spite of him, and will not be controlled by law or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. He stretcheth out his hand against God, in defiance of him, and of the power of his wrath. God is indeed out of his reach, but he stretcheth out his hand against him, to shew, that if it were in his power, he would ungod him.

This speaks the audacious impiety of some sinners, who are really *haters of God*, Rom. i. 30. and whose carnal mind is not only an enemy to him, but enmity it self, Rom. viii. 7. But alas! the sinner's malice is as impotent as it is impudent, what can he do? Why, *he strengthneth himself* (he would be valiant, so some read it) *against the Almighty*, he thinks with his exorbitant despotick power to *change times and laws*, Dan. vii. 25. and in spite of providence to carry the day for rapine and wrong, clear of the check of conscience. Note, It is the prodigious madness of presumptuous sinners, that they enter the lists with omnipotence: *Wo unto him that strives with his maker.* That is generally taken for a further description of the sinner's daring presumption, *ver. 26. He runs upon him*, upon God himself, in a direct opposition to him, to his precepts and providences, even upon his neck, as a desperate



desperate combatant, when he finds himself an unequal match for his adversary, flies in his face, tho' at the same time he falls on his sword's point, or the sharp spike of his buckler. Every sinner runs from God, but the presumptuous sinner, who sins with a high hand, runs upon him, fights against him, and bids defiance to him; and it is easy to foretel what will be the issue.

2. He wraps himself up in security and sensuality, *ver. 27. He covers his face with his fatness.* This signifies both the pampering of his flesh with daily delicious fare, and the hardning of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. Note, The gratifying of the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting that to the full, oft turns to the damage of the soul and its interests: Why is God forgot and slighted, but because the belly is made a God of, and the happiness placed in the delights of sense. They that fill themselves with wine and strong drink, abandon all that is serious, and flatter themselves with hopes that *to-morrow shall be as this day*, Isa. lvi. ult. *Wo to them that are thus at ease in Sion*, Amos vi. 1, 3, 4. Luke xii. 19. The fat that covers his face, makes him look bold and haughty, and that which covers his flanks, makes him lie easy and soft, and feel little: But this will prove poor shelter against the darts of God's wrath.

3. He enriches himself with the spoils of all about him, *ver. 28.* He dwells in cities which he himself hath made desolate, by expelling the inhabitants out of them, that he might be placed alone in them, Isa. v. 8. It is strange what pleasure proud and cruel men can take in ruins, when they are of their own making, in *destroying cities*, Psal. ix. 6. and triumphing in the destruction, since they cannot otherwise make them their own, but by making them ready to become heaps, and frightening the inhabitants out of them. Note, Those that aim to engross the world to themselves, and grasp at all, lose the comfort of all, and make themselves miserable in the midst of all. How doth this tyrant gain his point, and make himself master of cities that have all the marks of antiquity upon them? We are told, *ver. 35.* he doth it by malice and falsehood, the two chief ingredients of his wickedness, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning; they conceive mischief, and then they effect it by preparing deceit, pretending to protect those whom they design to subdue, and making leagues of peace the more effectually to carry on the operations of war. From such wicked men God deliver all good men!

2. Let us see now what is the miserable condition of this wicked man, both in spiritual and temporal judgments.

1. His inward peace is continually disturbed. He seems to those about him to be easy, who therefore envy him, and wish themselves in his condition; but that he knows what is in men, tells us that a wicked man has so little comfort and satisfaction in his own breast, that he is rather to be pitied than envied.

(1.) His own conscience accuseth him, and with the pangs and throws of that, *he travellet in pain all his days*, *ver. 20.* He is continually uneasy at the thought of the cruelties he has been guilty of, and the blood in which he has embrued his hands; his sins stare him in the face at every turn. *Diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos.*

(2.) He is vexed at the uncertainty of the continuance of his wealth and power, *the number of years is hidden to the oppressor*: He knows, whatever he pretends, that it will not last always, and has reason to fear it will not last long, and this he frets at.

(3.) He is under a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, (Heb. x. 27.) which puts him into, and keeps him in a continual terror and consternation, so that he dwells with Cain in the land of Nod, or commotion, Gen. iv. 16. and is made like *Pashur, Mayor-missabib, a terror round about*, Jer. xx. 3, 4. *ver. 21. A dreadful sound is in his ears.* He knows both heaven and earth are incensed against him, that God is angry with him, and all the world hates him, and he has done nothing to make his peace with either, and therefore thinks every one that meets him will slay him, Gen. iv. 14. Or like a man absconding for debt, that thinks every man a bailiff. Fear came in at first with sin, Gen. iii. 10. and still attends it. Even in prosperity he is apprehensive that the destroyer will come upon him, either some destroying angel sent of God to avenge his quarrel, or some of his injured subjects that will be their own avengers. Those who are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, usually go down slain to the pit, Ezek. xxxii. 25. the expectation of which makes them a terror to themselves. This is further set forth, *ver. 22.* that he is in his own apprehension waited of for the sword, for he knows that *he who killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword*, Rev. xiii. 10. A guilty conscience represents to the sinner a flaming sword turning every way, Gen. iii. ult. and himself inevitably running on it. Again, *ver. 23.* He knows that the day of darkness (or the night of darkness rather) is ready at his hand, that it is appointed to him, and cannot be put by, that it is hastning on apace, and cannot be put off. This day of darkness is something beyond death, it is that day of the Lord which to all wicked people will be darkness and not light, and in which they will be doomed to utter endless darkness. Note, Some wicked people, tho' they seem secure, have already received the sentence of death, eternal death within themselves, and plainly see hell gaping for them. No marvel that it follows, *ver. 24.* Trouble and anguish (that inward tribulation and anguish of soul spoken of Rom. ii. 8, 9. which is the effect of God's indignation and wrath fastning upon the conscience) shall

make him afraid of worse to come: What is the hell before him, if this be the hell within him? And tho' he would fain shake off his fears, drink them away, and jest them away, it will not do, *they shall prevail against him*, and over-power him as a king ready to the battle, with forces too strong to be resisted. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience.

(4.) If at any time he be in trouble, he despairs of getting out, *ver. 22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness*, but he gives himself up for gone and lost in an endless night. Good men expect light at evening time, light out of darkness, but what reason have they to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble, who would not return from the darkness of sin, but went on in it? Psal. lxxxii. 5. It is the misery of damned sinners, that they know they shall never return out of that utter darkness, nor pass the gulph fixed.

(5.) He perplexeth himself with continual care, especially if providence never so little frown upon him, *ver. 23.* Such a dread he has of poverty, and such a waste doth he discern upon his estate, that he is already, in his own imagination, *wandering abroad for bread*, going a begging for a meal's meat, and saying, *Where is it?* The rich man in his abundance cried out, *What shall I do?* Luke xii. 17. Perhaps he pretends fear of wanting, as an excuse of his covetous practices, and justly may he be brought to this extremity at last. We read of those who were full, but have hired out themselves for bread, 1 Sam. ii. 5. which this sinner will not do, he cannot dig, he is too fat, *ver. 27.* but to beg he may well be ashamed. See Psal. cix. 10. David never saw the righteous so far forsaken as to beg their bread, for, verily, they shall be fed by the charitable unasked, Psal. xxxvii. 3, 25. But the wicked want it, and cannot expect it should be readily given them: How should they find mercy that never shewed mercy?

2. His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence, and all his comfort, will come to an end with it. How can he prosper when God runs upon him? So some understand that, *ver. 26.* And whom God runs upon, he will certainly run down, for when he judgeth he will overcome. See how the judgments of God cross this worldly wicked man in all his cares, desires and projects, and so compleat his misery.

(1.) He is in care to get, but *he shall not be rich*, *ver. 29.* His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich: He is not rich that has not enough, and he has not enough that doth not think he has: It is contentment only that is great gain. Providence remarkably keeps some from being rich, defeating their enterprizes, breaking their measures, and keeping them always behind hand. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich, it goes as it comes, it is got by one sin, and spent upon another.

(2.) He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain, *his substance shall not continue*; it will dwindle and come to nothing, God blasts it, and what came up in a night perisheth in a night: *Wealth gotten by vanity will certainly be diminished.* Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of those estates which have been raised by oppression, however it goes with a curse to those that succeed. *De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius Hæres.* He purchaseth estates to him and his heirs for ever, but to what purpose? *he shall not prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth*, neither the credit nor the comfort of his riches shall be prolonged, and when those are gone, where is the perfection of them? How indeed can we expect the perfection of any thing to be prolonged upon the earth, where every thing is transitory, and we soon see the end of all perfection?

(3.) He is in care to leave what he has got and kept to his children after him; but in this he is crossed, the branches of his family shall perish, in whom he hoped to have lived and flourished, and to have had the reputation of making them all great men. *They shall not be green*, *ver. 32.* *The flame shall dry them up*, *ver. 30.* He shall shake them off as blossoms that never knit, or as the unripe grape, *ver. 33.* They shall die in the beginning of their days, and never come to maturity. Many a man's family is ruined by his iniquity.

(4.) He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed. (1.) He may perhaps be taken from it. *Ver. 30. By the breath of God's mouth* (i. e. by his wrath, which like a stream of brimstone kindles the fire that devours him, Isa. xxx. 33. Or, by his word, he speaks and it is done presently) shall he go away, and leave his wealth to others. *This night thy soul shall be required of thee*, and so the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, the worldling in his worldliness. (2.) It may perhaps be taken from him, and fly away like an eagle towards heaven: *It shall be accomplished* (or cut off) *before his time*, *ver. 32. i. e.* He shall survive his prosperity, and see himself stripped of it.

(5.) He is in care when he is in trouble, how to get out of it, (not how to get good by it) but in this also he is crossed, *ver. 30. He shall not depart out of darkness*; when he begins to fall, like Haman, down with him. It was said of him, *ver. 22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness*, he frightened himself with the perpetuity of his calamity, and God also shall chuse his delusions, and bring his fears upon him, Isa. lxvi. 4. as he did upon Israel, Numb. xiv. 28. God saith amen to his distrust and despair.

(6.) He.



(6.) He is in care to secure his partners, and hopes to secure himself by his partnership with them; but that is in vain too, *ver.* 34, 35. The congregation of them, the whole confederacy, they and all their tabernacles shall be desolate, and consumed with fire. Hypocrisy and bribery are here charged upon them; *i. e.* deceitful dealing both with God and man: God affronted under colour of religion, man wronged under colour of justice. It is impossible these should end well: *Tho' hand join in hand for the support of these perfidious practices, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished.*

3. The use and application of all this. Will the prosperity of presumptuous sinners end at last thus miserably? then, *ver.* 31. *Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity.* Let others learn by our warnings, and let not us rest on that broken reed, which always failed those that leaned on it. (1.) Those that trust to their sinful ways of getting wealth, *trust in vanity*, and *vanity will be their recompence*, for they shall not get what they expected: Their arts will deceive them, and perhaps ruin them in this world. (2.) Those that trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, *trust in vanity*, for it will yield them no satisfaction: The guilt that cleaves to it will ruin the joy of it: They sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind, and will own at length, with the utmost confusion, that *a deceived heart turned them aside*, and they cheated themselves with *a lie in their right hand.*

## C H A P. XVI.

*This chapter begins Job's reply to that discourse of Eliphaz, which we had in the foregoing chapter; and it is but the second part of the same song of lamentation, with which he had before bemoaned himself, and to the same melancholy tune. (1.) He upbraids his friends with their unkind usage of him, ver. 1—5. (2.) He represents his own case as very deplorable upon all accounts, ver. 6—16. (3.) He still holds fast his integrity, concerning which he appeals to God's righteous judgment, from the unrighteous censures of his friends, ver. 17—22.*

1. **T**HEN Job answered and said, 2. I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. 3. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? 4. I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. 5. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

Both Job and his friends took the same way that disputants commonly take, which is to undervalue one another's sense, and wisdom, and management. The saw of contention, the longer it is drawn the hotter it grows, and the *beginning of this sort of strife is as the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with.* Eliphaz had represented Job's discourses as idle and unprofitable, and nothing to the purpose, and Job here gives his the same character. Those who are free in passing such censures, must expect to have them retorted, it is easy, it is endless; but *cui bono?* What good doth it do? It will stir up men's passions, but will never convince their judgments, nor set truth in a clear light.

Job here reproves Eliphaz,

1. For needless repetitions, *ver.* 2. *I have heard many such things.* You tell me nothing but what I knew before; nothing but what you yourselves have before said, you offer nothing new, it is the same thing over and over again, which Job thinks as great a trial of his patience, as almost any of his troubles. The inculcating of the same things thus by an adversary, is indeed provoking and nauseous, but by a teacher it is often necessary, and must not be grievous to the learner, to whom *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line:* Many things we have heard which it is good for us to hear again, that we may understand and remember them better, and be more affected with them, and influenced by them.

2. For unskillful applications. They came with a design to comfort him, but they went about it very awkwardly, and when they touched Job's case quite mistook it, *miserable comforters are ye all*, that instead of offering any thing to alleviate the affliction, add affliction to it, and make it yet more grievous. The patient's case is sad indeed, when his medicines are poisons, and his physicians his worst disease. What Job saith here of his friends, is true of all creatures in comparison with God, and one time or other we shall be made to see it and own it, that miserable comforters are they all. When we are under convictions of sin, terrors of conscience, and the arrests of death, it is only the blessed Spirit that can comfort effectually, all others without him do it miserably, and sing songs to a heavy heart to no purpose.

3. For endless impertinence. Job wisheth that *vain words might have an end*, *ver.* 3. And if they be vain, it were well they were never begun, and the sooner they are ended the better. Those who are so wise as to speak to the purpose, will be so wise

as to know when they have said enough of a thing, and when it is time to break off.

4. For causeless obstinacy. *What emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?* It is a great piece of confidence, and unaccountable with Eliphaz, to charge men with those crimes which we cannot prove upon them, to pass a judgment on men's spiritual state, upon the view of their outward condition, and to re-advance those objections which have been again and again answered.

5. For the violation of the sacred laws of friendship, doing by his brother as he would not have been done by, and as his brother would not have done by him. This is a cutting reproof, and very affecting, *ver.* 4, 5.

1. He desires his friends, in imagination, for a little while to change conditions with him, to put their souls into his soul's stead; to suppose themselves in misery like him, and him at ease like them: And it is no absurd or foreign supposition, but what might quickly become true in fact; so strange, so sudden many times are the vicissitudes of human affairs, and such the turns of the wheel, that the spokes soon change places. Whatever our brethren sorrow are, we ought by sympathy to make them our own, because we know not how soon they may be so.

2. He represents the unkindness of their carriage towards him, by shewing what he could do to them, if they were in his condition. *I could speak as ye do.* It is an easy thing to trample upon those that are down, and to find fault with what those say that are in extremity of pain and affliction. *I could heap up words against you*, as you do against me, and how would you like it? how would you bear it?

3. He shews them what they should do, by telling them what in that case he would do, *ver.* 5. *I would strengthen you*, and say all I could to assuage your grief, but nothing to aggravate it. It is natural to sufferers to think what they would do, if the tables were turned; but perhaps our hearts may deceive us, we know not what we would do: We find it easier to discern the reasonableness and importance of a command, when we have occasion to claim the benefit of it, than when we have occasion to do the duty of it. See what is the duty we owe to our brethren in affliction. (1.) We should say and do all we can to strengthen them, suggesting to them such considerations as are proper to encourage their confidence in God, and to support their sinking spirits. Faith and patience are the strength of the afflicted, what helps these graces confirms the feeble knees. (2.) To assuage their grief, the causes of their grief, if possible, or however their repentment of those causes. Good words cost nothing, but they may be of good service to those that are in sorrow, not only as it is some comfort to them to see their friends concerned for them, but they may so be minded of that which through the prevalency of grief was forgotten. *Tho' hard words (we say) break no bones, yet kind words may help to make broken bones rejoice; and those have the tongue of the learned, that know how to speak a word in season to the weary.*

6. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased? 7. But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company. 8. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me: and my leanness rising up in me, beareth witness to my face. 9. He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth: mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. 10. They have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully, they have gathered themselves together against me. 11. God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. 12. I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark. 13. His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. 14. He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant. 15. If I have sowed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust. 16. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eye-lids is the shadow of death:

Job's complaint is here very bitter, as any where in all his discourses, and he is at a stand whether to smother it or to give it vent: Sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, is a relief to the afflicted, according as the temper or the circumstances are, but Job found help by neither, *ver.* 6. (1.) Sometimes giving vent to grief gives ease, but *tho' I speak* (saith Job) *my grief is not assuaged*, my spirit is never the lighter for the pouring out of my complaint, nay, what I speak is so misconstrued, as to be turned to the aggravation of my grief. (2.) At other times keeping silence makes the trouble the easier, and the sooner forgot, but (saith Job) *tho' I forbear* I am never the nearer, *what am I eased?* If he complained, he was censured as passionate; if not, as sullen: If he maintained his integrity, that was his crime, if he made no answer to their accusations, his silence was taken for a confession of his guilt.



Here is a doleful remonstrance of Job's grievances: O what reason have we to bless God that we are not making such complaints here! He complains,

1. That his family was scattered, *ver. 7. He made me weary*, weary of speaking, weary of forbearing, weary of my friends, weary of life it self, my journey through the world proves so very uncomfortable that I am quite tired with it, and this made it as tiresome as any thing, that all his company was made desolate. His children and servants killed, and the poor remains of his great household dispersed. The company of good people, that used to meet at his house for religious worship, was now scattered, and he spent his sabbaths in silence and solitude. He had company indeed, but such as he would rather have been without, for they seemed to triumph in his desolation. If lovers and friends are put far from us, we must see and own God's hand in it, making our company desolate.

2. That his body was worn away with diseases and pains, so that he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, *ver. 8. His face was furrowed, not with age, but sickness: thou hast filled me with wrinkles.* His flesh was wasted with the running of his sore boils, so that his leanness rose up in him, *i. e.* his bones that were not seen stuck out, *chap. xxxiii. 21.* These are called witnesses against him, witnesses of God's displeasure against him, and such witnesses as his friends produced against him to prove him a wicked man. Or, they are witnesses for me, that my complaint is not causeless, or, witnesses to me that I am a dying man, and must be gone shortly.

3. That his enemy was a terror to him, threatened him, frightened him, looked stern upon him, and gave all the indications of rage against him. *ver. 9. He tears me in his wrath.* But who is this enemy! Either (1.) Eliphaz, who shewed himself very much exasperated against him, and perhaps had expressed himself with such marks of indignation as are here mentioned: however, what he said tore Job's good name, and thundred nothing but terror to him: his eyes were sharpened to spy out matter of reproach against Job, and very barbarously both he and the rest of them used him. Or, (2.) Satan: he was his enemy that hated him, and perhaps by the divine permission terrified him with apparitions, as (some think) he terrified our Saviour, which put him into his agonies in the garden; and thus he aimed to make him curse God. It is not improbable, that this is the enemy he means. Or, (3.) God himself: If we understand it of him, the expressions are indeed as rash as any he used: God hates none of his creatures, but Job's melancholy did thus represent to him the terrors of the Almighty: and nothing can be more grievous to a good man, than to apprehend God to be his enemy. If the wrath of a king be as messengers of death, what is the wrath of the King of kings!

4. That all about him were abusive to him, *ver. 10.* They came upon him with open mouth to devour him, as if they would swallow him alive, so terrible were their threats, and so scornful was their carriage to him. They did him all the indignities they could invent, and even smote him on the cheek, and herein many were confederate, they gathered themselves together against him, even the abjects, *Psal. xxxv. 15.* Herein Job was a type of Christ, as many of the antients make him: these very expressions are used in the predictions of his sufferings, *Psal. xxii. 13. They gaped upon me with their mouths;* and *Mic. v. 1. They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek,* which was literally fulfilled, *Mat. xxvi. 67.* how were they increased that troubled him!

5. That God, instead of delivering him out of their hands, as he hoped, delivered him into their hands. *ver. 11. He had turned me over into the hands of the wicked.* They could have had no power against him if it, had not been given them from above; he therefore looks beyond them to God who gave them their commission, as David did when Shimei cursed him: but he thinks it strange, and almost thinks it hard, that those should have power against him who were God's enemies as much as his: but God sometimes makes use of wicked men as his sword to one another, (*Psal. xvii. 13.*) and his rod to his own children, *Isa. x. 5.* Herein also Job was a type of Christ, who was delivered into wicked hands to be crucified and slain by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.* *Acts. ii. 23.*

6. That God not only delivered him into the hands of the wicked, but took him into his own hands too, into which it is a fearful thing to fall, *ver. 12.* I was at ease in the comfortable enjoyment of the gifts of God's bounty, not fretting and uneasy, as some are in the midst of their prosperity, who thereby provoke God to strip them. Yet he has broken me asunder, put me upon the rack of pain, and torn me limb from limb. God in afflicting him had seemed, (1.) As if he were furious: tho' fury is not in God he thought it was, when he took him by the neck (as a strong man in a passion would take a child) and shook him to pieces, triumphing in the irresistible power he had to do what he would with him. (2.) As if he were partial: he hath distinguished me from the rest of mankind by this hard usage of me, he hath set me up for his mark, the butt at which he is pleased to let fly all his arrows: at me they are directed, and they come not by chance, against me they are levelled, as if I were the

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the greatest sinner of all the men of the east, or were singled out to be made an example. When God set him up for a mark, his archers presently compassed him round. God has archers at command who will be sure to hit the mark that he sets up. Whoever are our enemies, we must look upon them as God's archers, and see him directing the arrow. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* (3.) As if he were cruel, and his wrath as relentless as his power was resistless. As if he contrived to touch him in the tenderest part, cleaving his reins asunder with acute pains, perhaps they were nephritick pains, those of the stone, which lie in the region of the kidneys. As if he had no mercy in reserve for him, he doth not spare, nor abate any thing of the extremity. And as if he aimed at nothing but his death, and his death in the midst of the most grievous tortures, "he pours out my gall upon the ground." As when men have taken a wild beast and killed it, they open it, and pour out the gall with a loathing of it. He thought his blood was poured out as if it were not only not precious but nauseous. (4.) As if he were unreasonable and insatiable in his executions. *ver. 14. He breaketh me with breach upon breach,* follows me with one wound after another. So his troubles came at first, while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking another came, and so it was still, new boils were rising every day, so that he had no prospect of the end of his troubles: thus he thought God run upon him like a giant, whom he could not possibly stand before or confront; as the giants of old ran down all their poor neighbours, and were quite too hard for them. Note, Even good men when they are in great and extraordinary troubles have much ado not to entertain hard thoughts of God.

7. That he had divested himself of all his honour, and all his comfort, in compliance with the surprizing providences that were concerning him. Some can lessen their own troubles by concealing them, holding their heads as high, and putting as good a face upon it as ever; but Job could not do so, he received the impressions of them, and, as one truly penitent, and truly patient, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, *ver. 15, 16.* (1.) He now laid aside all his ornaments and soft clothing, consulted not either his ease or finery in his dress, but sewed sackcloth upon his skin, that clothing he thought good enough for such a defiled distempered body as he had. Silks upon sores, such sores, he thought would be disagreeable, sackcloth would be more becoming. Those are fond indeed of gay clothing that will not be weaned from it by sickness and old age, and as Job was, *ver. 8. by wrinkles and leanness.* He not only put on sackcloth but sewed it on, as one that resolved to continue his humiliation as long as the affliction continued. (2.) He insisted not upon any points of honour, but humbled himself under humbling providences, he *defiled his horn in the dust*, and refused the respects that used to be paid to his dignity, power, and eminency. Note, When God brings down our condition, that should bring down our spirits. Better lay the horn in the dust, than lift it up in contradiction to the designs of providence, and have it broken at last. Eliphaz had represented Job as high and haughty, and unhumbled under his affliction, no, faith Job, I know better things; the dust is now the fittest place for me. (3.) He banished mirth as utterly unseasonable, and set himself to sow in tears, *ver. 16. My face is foul with weeping*, so constantly for my sins, for God's displeasure against me, and for my friends unkindness; this has brought a shadow of death upon my eye-lids. He had not only wept away all his beauty, but almost wept his eyes out. In this also he was a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and much in tears, and pronounced those blessed that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

17. Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure. 18. O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place. 19. Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. 20. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God. 21. O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour. 22. When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

Job's condition was very deplorable, but had he nothing to support him, nothing to comfort him? Yes, and he here tells us what it was.

1. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had walked uprightly, and had never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready than he to acknowledge his sins of infirmity, but upon search he could not charge himself with any enormous crime, for which he should be made more miserable than other men, *ver. 17.* He had kept conscience void of offence (1.) Towards men. *Not for any injustice in my hands*, any wealth that I have unjustly got or kept. Eliphaz had represented him as a tyrant and an oppressor; No, faith he, I never did any wrong to any man, but always despised the gain of oppression. (2.) Towards God. Also my prayer is pure, which it cannot be as long as there is *injustice in our hands*, *Isa. i. 15.*



Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in religion, but he instanteth in prayer, the great act of religion, and professeth that in that he was pure, tho' not from all infirmity, yet from reigning and allowed guile: it was not like the prayers of the Pharisees, who looked no further than to be seen of men, and to serve a turn.

This assertion of his own integrity he backs with a solemn imprecation of shame and confusion to himself, if it were not true, *ver. 18.* (1.) If there were any injustice in his hands, he wishes it might not be concealed; *O earth, cover thou not my blood, i. e. the innocent blood of others, which I am suspected to have shed. Murther will out; and let it, saith Job, if I have ever been guilty of it, Gen. iv. 10, 11. The day is coming, when the earth shall disclose her blood, Isa. xxvi. 21. and a good man is far from dreading that day.* (2.) If there were any impurity in his prayers, he wisheth they might not be accepted; *let my cry have no place. He was willing to be judged by that rule, if I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me, Psal. lxxvi. 18.* There is another probable sense of these words, that he doth hereby, as it were, lay his death upon his friends, who broke his heart with their harsh censures, and chargeth the guilt of his blood upon them, begging of God to avenge it, and that the cry of his blood might have no place in which to lie hid, but might come up to heaven, and be heard by him that makes inquisition for blood.

2. He could appeal to God's omniscience concerning his integrity, *ver. 19.* The witness in our own bosoms for us will stand us in little stead, if we have not a witness in heaven for us too, for *God is greater than our hearts*, and we are not to be our own judges; this therefore is Job's triumph, *my witness is in heaven.* Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to a good man, when he lies under the censure of his brethren, that there is a God in heaven who knows his integrity, and will clear it up sooner or later. See *Job v. 31, 37.* This one witness is instead of a thousand.

3. He had a God to go to, before whom he might unbosom himself, *ver. 20, 21.* See here, (1.) How the case stood between him and his friends; he knew not how to be free with them, nor could he expect either a fair hearing with them, or fair dealing from them, my friends (so they call themselves) scorn me, they set themselves not only to oppose me, but to expose me; they are of counsel against me, and use all their art and eloquence (so the word signifies) to run me down. The scorn of friends are more cutting than those of enemies, but we must expect them, and provide accordingly. (2.) How it stood between him and God. He doubted not but that (1.) God did now take cognizance of his sorrows. *Mine eye pours out tears to God.* He had said, *ver. 16.* that he wept much, here he tells us in what channel his tears ran, and which way they were directed: his sorrow was not that of the world, but he sorrowed after a godly sort, wept before the Lord, and offered to him the sacrifice of a broken heart. Note, Even tears, when sanctified to God, give ease to troubled spirits; and if men slight our grief, this may comfort us, that God regards them. (2.) That he would in due time clear up his innocency, *ver. 21.* *O that one might plead for a man with God!* If he could but now have the same freedom at God's bar that men commonly have at the bar of the civil magistrate, he doubted not but to carry his cause, for the Judge himself was a witness to his integrity. The language of this wish is that, *Isa. l. 7, 8.* *I know that I shall not be ashamed, for he is near that justifies me.* Some give a gospel sense of this verse, and the original will very well bear it: *and he will plead, (i. e. there is one that will plead) for man with God, even the son of man for his friend, or neighbour.* Those who pour out tears before God, tho' they cannot plead for themselves, by reason of their distance and defects, have a friend to plead for them, even the son of man, and on this we must bottom all our hopes of acceptance with God.

4. He had a prospect of death which would put a period to all his troubles: such confidence had he towards God, that he could take pleasure in thinking of the approach of death, when he should be determined to his everlasting state, as one that doubted not but it would be well with him then: *when a few years are come, the years of number which are determined and appointed to me, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.* Note, 1. To die is to go the way whence we shall not return; it is to go a journey, a long journey, a journey for good and all; to remove from this to another country, from the world of sense to the world of spirits: it is a journey to our long home; there will be no coming back to our state in this world, nor any change of our state in the other world. 2. We must all of us very certainly, and very shortly go this journey; and it is comfortable to those who keep a good conscience to think of it, for it is the crown of their integrity.

## C H A P. XVII.

In this chapter (1.) Job reflects upon the harsh censures which his friends had passed upon him, and looking upon himself as a dying man, *ver. 1.* he appeals to God, and begs of him speedily to appear for him and right him, because they had wronged him, and he knew not how to right himself, *ver. 2—7.* but hopes tho' it be a surprize it will be no stumbling-block to good people to see

him thus abused, *ver. 8, 9.* (2.) He reflects upon the vain hopes they had fed him with, that he should yet see good days, shewing that his days were just at an end, and with his body all his hopes would be buried in the dust, *ver. 10—16.* His friends becoming strange to him, which greatly grieved him, he makes death and the grave familiar to him, which yielded him some comfort.

1. **M**Y breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me. 2. Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation? 3. Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me? 4. For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them. 5. He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail. 6. He hath made me also a by-word of the people, and aforetime I was as a tabret. 7. Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow. 8. Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. 9. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Job's discourse here is somewhat broken and interrupted, and he passeth suddenly from one thing to another, as is usual with men in trouble: but we may reduce what is said here to three heads.

1. The deplorable condition which poor Job was now in, which he describes to aggravate the great unkindness of his friends to him, and to justify his own complaints. Let us see what his case was.

(1.) He was a dying man, *ver. 1.* He had said, *chap. xvi. ult.* *When a few years are come, I shall go that long journey.* But here he corrects himself, what do I talk of years to come, alas, I am just setting out on that journey, am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, my breath is already corrupt, or broken off, my spirits are spent. I am a gone man. It is good for every one of us thus to look upon our selves as dying, and especially to think of it when we are sick. We are dying, that is, (1.) Our life is going, for the breath of life is going. It is continually going forth, it is in our nostrils, *Isa. iii. ult.* the door at which it entered, *Gen. ii. 7.* there it is upon the threshold ready to depart. Perhaps, Job's distemper obstructed his breathing, and shorth breath will be no breath after a while. Let the anointed of the Lord be the breath of our nostrils, and let us get spiritual life breathed into us, and that breath will never be corrupted. (2.) Our time is ending. *My days are extinct, are put out,* as a candle which from the first lighting is continually wasting and burning down, and will by degrees burn out of itself, but may by a thousand accidents be extinguished. Such is life. It concerns us therefore carefully to redeem the days of time, and to spend them in getting ready for the days of eternity, which will never be extinct. (3.) We are expected in our long home. *The graves are ready for me.* But would not one grave serve? yes, but he speaks of the *sepulchres of his fathers* to which he must be gathered: the graves where they are laid are ready for me also. Graves in comfort, the congregation of the dead. Wherever we go there is but a step between us and the grave. Whatever is unready, that is ready: it is a bed soon made. If the graves be ready for us, it concerns us to be ready for the graves. *The graves for me,* so it runs; noting not only his expectation of death, but his desire of it; I have done with the world, and have nothing now to wish for but a grave.

(2.) He was a despised man, *ver. 6.* He (*i. e.* Eliphaz, so some, or rather God, whom he all along acknowledgeth to be the author of his calamities) has made me a by-word of the people, the talk of the country, a laughing-stock to many, a gazing-stock to all, and aforetime, or, to men's faces, publicly I was as a tabret, that who would might play upon, they made ballads of him: his name became a proverb, it is so still, as poor as Job. He has now made me a by-word, a reproach of men, whereas aforetime in my prosperity, I was as a tabret, the darling of the country (*Deliciae humani generis*) whom they were all pleased with. It is common for those who were honoured in their wealth to be despised in their poverty.

(3.) He was a man of sorrows, *ver. 7.* He wept so much that he had almost lost his sight, *mine eye is dim by reason of sorrow,* *chap. xvi. 16.* The sorrow of the world thus works darkness and death. He vexed so much, that he had fretted all the flesh off his back, and was become a perfect anatomy, a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, *all my members are as a shadow.* I am grown so poor and thin, that I am not to be called a man, but the shadow of a man.

2. The ill use which his friends made of his miseries: they trampled upon him, and insulted over him, and condemned him as an hypocrite, because he was thus grievously afflicted. Hard usage! Now observe,

(1.) How Job describes it, and what construction he puts upon their discourses with him. He looks upon himself as basely abused



by them. (1.) They abused him with their foul censures, condemning him as an ill man, justly reduced thus, and exposed to contempt, *ver. 2.* They are mockers, that deride my calamities, and insult over me, because I am thus brought low. They are so with me, abusing me to my face, pretending friendship in their visit, but intending mischief. I cannot get clear of them, they are continually tearing me, and they will not be wrought upon, either by reason or pity, to let fall the prosecution. (2.) They abused him too with their fair promises, for in them they did banter him. He reckons them, *ver. 5.* among those that speak flattery to their friends. They all came to mourn with him, Eliphaz began with a commendation of him, *chap. iv. 3.* They had all promised him how happy he should be, if he would take their advice: Now all this he looked upon as flattery, and designed to vex him so much the more. All this he calls their provocation, *ver. 2.* They did what they could to provoke him, and then condemned him for his resentment of it; but he thinks himself excusable when his eye continued thus in their provocation, it never ceased, and he could never look off it. Note, The unkindness of those that trample upon their friends in affliction, that banter and abuse them then, is enough to try, if not to tire, the patience even of Job himself.

(2.) How he condemns it. (1.) It was a sign that *God had hid their hearts from understanding*, *ver. 4.* and that in this matter they were infatuated, and their wonted wisdom was departed from them. Wisdom is a gift of God, which he grants to some, and withholds from others, grants at some times, and withholds at other times. Those that are void of compassion, are so far void of understanding. Where there is not the tenderness of a man, one may question whether there be the understanding of a man. (2.) It would be a lasting reproach and diminution to them; *therefore shalt thou not exalt them.* Those are certainly kept back from honour, whose hearts are hid from understanding. When God befools men, he will abase them. Sure they who discover so little acquaintance with the methods of providence, shall not have the honour of deciding this controversy! That is reserved for a man of better sense and better temper, such an one as Elihu afterwards appeared to be. (3.) It would entail a curse upon their families. He that thus violates the sacred laws of friendship, forfeits the benefit of it, not only for himself but for his posterity. *Even the eyes of his children shall fail*, and when they look for succour and comfort from their own and their father's friends, they shall look in vain, as I have done, and be as much disappointed as I am in you. Note, Those that wrong their neighbours, may prove to wrong their own children more than they are aware of.

(3.) How he appeals from them to God, *ver. 3.* Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee, *i. e.* Let me be assured that God will take the hearing and determining of the cause into his own hands, and I desire no more. Let some or other engage for God to bring on this matter. Thus they whose hearts condemn them not, have confidence towards God, and can with humble and believing boldness beg of him to search and try them. Some make Job here to glance upon the mediation of Christ, for he speaks of a surety with God, without whom he durst not appear before God, nor try his cause at his bar; for tho' his friends' accusations of him were utterly false, yet he could not justify himself before God but in a mediator. Our English annotations give this reading of the verse, *Appoint, I pray thee, my surety with thee*, viz. Christ who is with thee in heaven, and hath undertaken to be my surety, let him plead my cause, and stand up for me, and *who is he then that will strike upon mine hand?* *i. e.* who dares then contend with me? who shall lay any thing to my charge, if Christ be an advocate for me? *Rom. viii. 32, 33.* Christ is the surety of the better testament, *Heb. vii. 22.* a surety of God's appointing; and if he undertake for us, we need not fear what can be done against us.

3. The good use which the righteous should make of Job's afflictions both from God, from his enemies, and from his friends, *ver. 8, 9.* Observe here,

(1.) How the saints are described. (1.) They are upright men, honest and sincere, and that act from a steady principle, with a single eye. This was Job's own character, *chap. i. 1.* and probably he speaks of such upright men especially as had been his intimates and associates. (2.) They are the innocent, not perfectly so, but it is what they aim at, and press towards. Sincerity is evangelical innocency, and they that are upright are said to be *innocent from the great transgression*, *Psal. xix. 13.* (3.) They are the righteous, who walk in the way of righteousness. (4.) They have clean hands, kept clean from the gross pollutions of sin, and when spotted with infirmities *washed with innocency*, *Psal. xxvi. 6.*

(2.) How they should be affected with the account of Job's troubles: Great enquiry, no doubt, would be made concerning him, and every one would speak of him and his case, and what use will good people make of it?

1. It will amaze them. *Upright men shall be astonished at this*, they will wonder to hear that so good a man as Job, should be so grievously afflicted both in body, name, and estate, that God should lay his hand so heavy upon him, and that his friends, who ought to have comforted him, should add to his grief; that such a remarkable saint should be such a remarkable sufferer, and so useful a man laid aside in the midst of his usefulness, what shall we say to these things? Upright men tho' satisfied in general that God

is wise and holy in all he doth, yet cannot but be astonished at such dispensations of providence, paradoxes which will not be unfolded, till the mystery of God shall be finished.

2. It will animate them. Instead of being deterred from, and discouraged in the service of God, by the hard usage which this faithful servant of God met with, they shall be so much the more emboldened to proceed and persevere in it. That which was St Paul's care, *1 Thes. iii. 3.* was Job's, that no good man should be moved either from his holiness or his comfort, by these afflictions; that none should for the sake hereof think the worse of the ways or work of God. And that which was St Paul's comfort was his too, that *the brethren in the Lord would wax confident by his bonds*, *Phil. i. 14.* They would hereby be animated,

(1.) To oppose sin, and to confront the corrupt and pernicious inferences which evil men would draw from Job's sufferings, as that God has forsaken the earth, that it is in vain to serve him, and the like, *the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite*, will not bear to hear this, (*Rev. ii. 2.*) but will withstand him to his face; will stir up himself to search into the meaning of such providences, and study these hard chapters, that he may read them readily; will stir up himself to maintain religion's just but injured cause, against all its opposers. Note, The boldness of the attacks which profane people make upon religion, should sharpen the courage and resolution of its friends and advocates. It is time to stir, when proclamation is made in the gate of the camp, who is on the Lord's side? When vice is daring, it is no time for virtue to be sneaking.

(2.) To persevere in religion. The righteous, instead of drawing back, or so much as starting back, at this frightful spectacle, or standing still to deliberate whether he should proceed or no (*allude to 2 Sam. ii. 23.*) shall with so much the more constancy and resolution hold on his way, and press forward. Tho' in me he foresees bonds and afflictions abide him, yet *none of those things shall move him*, *Acts xx. 24.* Those who keep their eye upon heaven, as their end, will keep their feet in the paths of religion, as their way, whatever difficulties and discouragements they meet with in it.

(3.) In order thereunto, to grow in grace. He will not only hold on his way notwithstanding; but will grow stronger and stronger, and by the sight of other good men's trials, and the experience of his own, he will be made more vigorous and lively in his duty, more warm and affectionate, more resolute and undaunted, and the worse others are, the better he will be: That which disinays others, heartens him. The blustering wind makes the traveller gather his cloke the closer about him, and gird it the faster. They that are truly wise and good, will be continually growing wiser and better. Proficiency in religion, is a good sign of sincerity in it.

10. But as for you all, do you return, and come now: for I cannot find *one wise man* among you. 11. My days are past, my purposes are broken off, *even* the thoughts of my heart. 12. They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness. 13. If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. 14. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister. 15. And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it? 16. They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when *our rest together is* in the dust.

Job's friends had pretended to comfort him with the hopes of his return to a prosperous estate again; now here he shews,

1. That it was their folly to talk so, *ver. 10.* Return and come now, be convinced that you are in an error, and let me persuade you to be of my mind, for *I cannot find one wise man among you*, that knows how to explain the difficulties of God's providence, or how to apply the consolations of his promises. Those do not go wisely about the work of comforting the afflicted, who fetch their comforts from the possibility of their recovery and enlargement in this world, tho' that is not to be despaired of, but at the best it is uncertain, and if it should fail, as perhaps it may, the comfort built upon it will fail too: It is therefore our wisdom to comfort ourselves, and others in distress, with that which will not fail, the promise of God, his love and grace, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life.

2. That it would be much more his folly to heed them; for,

1. All his measures were already broken, and he was full of confusion, *ver. 11, 12.* He owns he had in his prosperity often pleased himself both with projects of what he should do, and prospects of what he should enjoy; but now he looked upon his days as past, and drawing towards a period, all those purposes were broken off, and those expectations dashed. He had had thoughts about enlarging his border, increasing his stock, and settling his children, and many pious thoughts, it is likely, of promoting religion in his country, redressing grievances, reforming the profane, relieving the poor, and raising funds perhaps for charitable uses, but all these thoughts of his heart were now at an end, and he should never have the satisfaction of seeing his designs effected. Note, The period of our days will be the period of all our contrivances and hopes



for this world ; but if with full purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord, death will not break off that purpose.

Job being thus put upon new counsels, was under a constant uneasiness, *ver. 12. The thoughts of his heart being broken, they changed the night into day, and shortened the light.* Some in their vanity and riot turn night into day, and day into night, but Job did so through trouble and anguish of spirit, which was a hindrance (1.) To the repose of the night, keeping his eyes waking, so that the night was as wearisome to him as the day, and the toils of the night tired him as much as the toils of the day. (2.) To the entertainments of the day : The light of the morning is welcome, but by reason of this inward darkness, the comfort of it is soon gone, and the day is to me as dismal as the black and dark night, *Deut. xxviii. 67.* See what reason we have to be thankful for that health and ease, which enables us to welcome both the shadows of the evening, and the light of the morning.

2. All his expectations from this world would very shortly be buried in the grave with him ; so that it was a jest for him to think of such mighty things as they had flattered him with the hopes of, *chap. iv. 19.—viii. 21.—xi. 17.* alas, you do but make a fool of me.

1. He saw himself just dropping into the grave. A convenient house, an easy bed, and agreeable relations, are some of those things which we take satisfaction in in this world : Job expected not any of these above ground, all he felt, and all he had in view was displeasing and disagreeable, but under ground he expected them.

(1.) He counted upon no house but the grave, *ver. 13.* If I wait, if there be any place where I shall ever be easy again, it must be in the grave : I should deceive my self if I should count upon any out-let from my trouble, but what death will give me : Nothing so sure as that. Note, In all our prosperity it is good to keep death in prospect : Whatever we expect, let us be sure to expect that ; for that may prevent other things we expect, but nothing will prevent that. But see how he endeavours not only to reconcile himself to the grave, but to recommend it to himself ; it is my house. The grave is a house, to the wicked it is a prison-house, *Job xxiv. 19, 20.* To the godly it is (*Bethabara*) a passage-house, in their way home. It is my house, mine by descent, I am born to it ; it is my father's house : Mine by purchase, I have made my self obnoxious to it. We must every one of us shortly remove to this house, and it is our wisdom to provide accordingly ; let us think of flitting, and send before to our long home.

(2.) He counted upon no quiet bed, but in the darkness, there, saith he, *I have made my bed.* It is made, for it is ready, and I am just going to it. The grave is a bed, for we shall rest in it in the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the morning of our everlasting day, *Isa. lvii. 2.* Let this make good people willing to die, it is but going to bed, they are weary and sleepy, and it is time they were in their beds, why should they not go willingly when their Father calls ? Nay, *I have made my bed,* by preparation for it, have endeavoured to make it easy, by keeping conscience pure, by seeing Christ lying in this bed, and so turning it into a bed of spices, and by looking beyond it to the resurrection.

(3.) He counted upon no agreeable relations, but what he had in the grave, *ver. 14. I have cried to corruption, i. e. to the grave,* where the body will corrupt, *Thou art my father,* for our bodies were formed out of the earth, and *to the worms there, ye are my mother and my sister,* to whom I am allied, for *man is a worm,* and with whom I must be conversant, for the *worms shall cover us,* *Job xxi. 26.* Job complained that his kindred were estranged from him, *chap. xix. 13, 14.* therefore here he claims acquaintance with other relations that would stick to him, when those disowned him. Note, 1. We are all of us near akin to corruption and the worms. 2. It is therefore good to make our selves familiar with them, by conversing much with them in our thoughts and meditations, which would very much help us above the inordinate love of life, and fear of death.

2. He saw all his hopes from this world dropping into the grave with him, *ver. 15, 16.* Seeing I must shortly leave the world, *where is now my hope ?* How can I expect to prosper, who do not expect to live ? He is not hopeless, but his hope is not there where they would have it be. *If in this life only* he had hope, he were of all men most miserable : No, as for my hope, that hope which I comfort and support my self with, who shall see it ? It is something out of sight that I hope for, not things that are seen, that are temporal, but things not seen, that are eternal : What is his hope he will tell us, *chap. xix. 25. Non est mortale quod opto, immortale peto.* But as for the hopes you would buoy me up with, they shall go down with me to the bars of the pit, you are dying men, and cannot make good your promises, I am a dying man, and cannot enjoy the good you promise ; seeing therefore our rest will be together in the dust, let us all lay aside the thoughts of this world, and set our hearts upon another. We must shortly be in the dust, for dust we are, dust and ashes in the pit, under the bars of the pit, held fast there, never to loose the bands of death till the general resurrection : But we shall rest there, we shall rest together there. Job and his friends could not agree now, but they will both be quiet in the grave ; the dust of that will shortly stop

their mouths, and put an end to the controversy : Let the foresight of this cool the heat of all contenders, and moderate the disputers of this world.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*In this chapter Bildad makes a second assault upon Job. In his first discourse, chap. viii. he had given him encouragement to hope that all should yet be well with him : But here, not a word of that ; he is grown more peevish, and is so far from being convinced by Job's reasonings, that he is but more exasperated. (1.) He sharply reproves Job as haughty, and passionate, and obstinate in his opinion, ver. 1—4. (2.) He enlargeth upon the doctrine he had before maintained, concerning the misery of wicked people, and the ruin that attends them, ver. 5—21. In which he seems all along to have an eye to Job's complaints of the miserable condition he was in, that he was in the dark, bewildered, ensnared, terrified, and hastening out of the world. Why this, saith Bildad, is the condition of a wicked man, and therefore thou art one.*

1. **T**HEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. How long will it be, ere you make an end of words ? mark, and afterwards we will speak. 3. Wherefore we are counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight ? 4. He teareth himself in his anger : shall the earth be forsaken for thee ? and shall the rock be removed out of his place ?

Bildad here shoots his arrows, even bitter words against poor Job, little thinking that tho' he was a wise and good man, yet in this instance he was serving Satan's design in adding to his affliction.

1. He charges him with idle, endless talk, as Eliphaz had done, *chap. xv. 2, 3. How long will it be, ere you make an end of words ?* *ver. 2.* Here he reflects not only upon Job himself, but either upon all the managers of the conference, thinking perhaps that Eliphaz and Zophar did not speak so close to the purpose as they might have done, or upon some that were present, who possibly took part with Job, and put in a word now and then in his favour, tho' it be not recorded. Bildad was weary of hearing others speak, and impatient till it came to his turn, which cannot be observed to any man's praise, for we ought to be swift to hear, and slow to speak. It is common for contenders to monopolize the reputation of wisdom, and then to insist upon it as their privilege to be dictators. How unbecoming that is in others, every one can see, but few that are guilty of it can see it in themselves. Time was when Job had the last word in all debates, *chap. xxix. 22. After my words they spake not again :* Then he was in power and prosperity, but now he was impoverished and brought low, he could scarce be allowed to speak at all, and every thing he said was as much vilified as formerly it had been magnified : *Wisdom* therefore (as the world goes) *is good with an inheritance,* *Eccl. vii. 11.* for the poor man's wisdom is despised, and because he is poor, his words are not heard, *Eccl. ix. 16.*

2. With a regardlessness of what was said to him, intimated in that, *Mark, and afterwards we will speak.* And it is to no purpose to speak, tho' what is said be never so much to the purpose, if those to whom it is spoken will not mark and observe it. Let the ear be opened to hear as the learned, and then the tongues of the learned will do good service, *Isa. l. 4.* and not otherwise. It is an encouragement to those that speak of the things of God, to see the hearers attentive.

3. With a haughty contempt and disdain of his friends, and of that which they offered, *ver. 3. Wherefore are we counted as beasts ?* This was invidious : Job had indeed called them mockers, had represented them both as unwise and as unkind, wanting both in the reason and tenderness of men, but he did not count them beasts, yet Bildad so represents it, (1.) Because his high spirit resented what Job had said, as if it had been the greatest affront imaginable. Proud men are apt to think themselves slighted more than really they are. (2.) Because his hot spirit was willing to find a pretence to be hard upon Job. Those that incline to be severe upon others, will have it thought that they have first been so upon them.

4. With outrageous passion. *He teareth himself in his anger,* *ver. 4.* Herein he seems to reflect upon what Job had said, *chap. xiii. 14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth ?* It is thine own fault, saith Bildad ; or upon what he said, *chap. xvi. 9.* where he seemed to charge it upon God, or, as some think, upon Eliphaz, *He teareth me in his wrath,* no, saith Bildad, thou alone shall bear it. *He teareth himself in his anger.* Note, Anger is a sin that is its own punishment : Fretful, passionate people tear and torment themselves. He teareth his soul, so the word is ; every sin wounds the soul, tears that, wrongs that, *Prov. viii. 36.* unbridled passion particularly.

5. With a proud and arrogant expectation to give law even to providence it self. *Shall the earth be forsaken for thee !* No sure, there is no reason for that, that the course of nature should be changed, and the settled rules of government violated, to gratify the humour of one man. Job, dost thou think the world cannot



cannot stand without thee? but that if thou art ruined, all the world is ruined and forsaken with thee? Some make it a reproof of Job's justification of himself, falsely insinuating, that either Job was a wicked man, or we must deny a providence, and suppose that God has forsaken the earth, and the Rock of ages is removed. It is rather a just reproof of his passionate complaints: When we quarrel with the events of providence, we forget that whatever befalls us it is (1.) According to the eternal purpose and counsel of God. (2.) According to the written word: Thus it is written, that in the world we must have tribulation, that since we sin daily, we must expect to smart for it; and (3.) According to the usual way and custom, the track of providence, nothing but what is common to men; and to expect that God's counsels should change, his method alter, and his word fail to please us, is as absurd and unreasonable as to think, that *the earth should be forsaken for us, and the rock removed out of its place.*

5. Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. 6. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him. 7. The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. 8. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. 9. The grin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him. 10. The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.

The rest of Bildad's discourse is entirely taken up in an elegant description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, in which there is a great deal of certain truth, and which will be of excellent use, if duly considered; that a sinful condition is a sad condition, and that iniquity will be mens ruin, if they do not repent of it: But (1.) It is not true that all wicked people are visibly and openly made thus miserable in this world; nor (2.) That all who are brought into great distress and trouble in this world, are therefore to be deemed and adjudged wicked men, tho' no other proof appears against them; and therefore tho' Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe, nor just.

In these verses we have,

1. The destruction of the wicked foreseen and foretold, under the similitude of darkness, *ver. 5, 6. Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out.* Even his light, the best and brightest part of him, shall be put out; even that which he rejoiced in, shall fail him. Or, the *yea* may refer to Job's complaints of the great distress he was in, and the darkness he should shortly make his bed in: Yea, faith Bildad, so it is, thou art clouded and straitened, and made miserable, and no better could be expected, for *the light of the wicked shall be put out*, and therefore thine shall. Observe here (1.) The wicked may have some light for a while, some pleasure, some joy, some hope within, as well as wealth, and honour, and power without. But his light is but a spark, *ver. 5.* a little thing, and soon extinguished. It is but a candle, *ver. 6.* wasting and burning down, and easily blown out: It is not the light of the Lord, that is sunlight, but the *light of his own fire*, and *sparks of his own kindling*, *Isa. 1. 11.* (2.) That light will certainly be put out at length, quite put out, so that not the least spark of it shall remain with which to kindle another fire. Even while he is in his tabernacle, while he is in the body, which is the tabernacle of the soul, (2 *Cor. v. 1.*) the light shall be dark, he shall have no true solid comfort, no joy that is satisfying, no hope that is supporting, even *the light that is in him is darkness*, and *how great is that darkness!* But when he is put out of this tabernacle by death, *his candle shall be put out with him*: The period of his life will be the final period of all his days, and will turn all his hopes into endless despair. *When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish*, *Prov. xi. 7.* *He shall lie down in sorrow.*

2. The preparatives for that destruction represented under the similitude of a beast or bird caught in a snare, or a malefactor arrested and taken into custody, in order to his punishment, *ver. 7, 8, 9, 10.*

1. Satan is preparing for his destruction. He is *the robber that shall prevail against him*, *ver. 9.* for as he was a murderer, so he was a robber from the beginning. He, as the tempter, lays snares for sinners in the way, wherever they go, and he shall prevail. If he make them sinful like himself, he will make them miserable like himself: He *hunts for the precious life.*

2. He is himself preparing for his own destruction, by going on in sin, and so *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.* God gives him up, as he deserves and desires, to his own counsels, and then *his own counsels cast him down*, *ver. 7.* His sinful projects and pursuits bring him to one mischief or other. He is *cast into a net by his own feet*, *ver. 8.* runs upon his own destruction, is *snared in the work of his own hands*, *Psal. ix. 16.* *his own tongue falls upon him*, *Psal. lxiv. 8.* *In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare.*

3. God is preparing for his destruction. The sinner by his sin is preparing the fuel, and then God by his wrath is preparing the fire. See here (1.) How the sinner is infatuated, to run

himself into the snare, and whom God will destroy he befools. (2.) How he is embarrassed: the steps of his strength, his mighty designs and efforts, shall be straitened, so that he shall not compass what he intended; and the more he strives to extricate himself, the more will he be entangled. Evil men wax worse and worse. (3.) How he is secured, and kept from out-running the judgments of God that are in pursuit of him: *the grin shall take him by the heel*. He can no more escape the divine wrath that is in pursuit of him, than a man so held can flee from the pursuer. *God knows how to reserve the wicked for the day of judgment*, 2 *Pet. ii. 9.*

11. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. 12. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. 13. It shall devour the strength of his skin: even the first-born of death shall devour his strength. 14. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. 15. It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. 16. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off. 17. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. 18. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. 19. He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings. 20. They that come after him, shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted. 21. Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.

Bildad here describes the destruction it self which wicked people are reserved for in the other world, and which in some degree often seizeth them in this world. Come, and see what a miserable condition the sinner is in, when his day comes to fall.

1. See him disheartened and weakned, by continual terrors arising from the sense of his own guilt, and the dread of God's wrath, *ver. 11, 12. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side*: the terrors of his own conscience shall haunt him so that he shall never be easy, wherever he goes these shall dog him, which way soever he looks these shall stare him in the face. It will make him tremble to see himself fought against by the whole creation, to see heaven frowning on him, hell gaping for him, and earth sick of him. He that carries his own accuser and his own tormenter always in his bosom, cannot but be afraid on every side. This will drive him to his feet, like the malefactor, who being conscious of his guilt, takes to his heels, and flies for the same, *flee when none pursues*, *Prov. xxviii. 1.* But his feet will do him no service, they are fast in the snare, *ver. 9.* The sinner may as soon overpower the divine omnipotence, as over-run the divine omniscience, *Amos ix. 2, 3.*

No marvel for the sinner to be dispirited, and distracted with fear, for (1.) He sees his ruin approaching, destruction shall be ready at his side, to seize him whenever justice gives the word, so that he is *brought into desolation in a moment*, *Psal. lxxiii. 19.* (2.) He feels himself utterly unable to grapple with it, either to escape it, or to bear up under it. That which he relied upon as his strength, his wealth, power, pomp, friends, and the hardness of his own spirit, shall fail him in the time of need, and be hunger-bitten, *i. e.* it shall do him no more service than a famished man pining away for hunger would do in work or war. The case being thus with him, no marvel that he is a terror to himself. Note, The way of sin is a way of fear, and leads to everlasting confusion, which the present terrors of an impure and unpacified conscience are earnest of, as they were to Cain and Judas.

2. See him devoured and swallowed up by a miserable death; and miserable indeed a wicked man's death is, how secure and jovial soever his life was.

(1.) See him dying, arrested by the firstborn of death, some disease, or some stroke that has in it a more than ordinary resemblance of death it self; so great a death as it is called, 2 *Cor. i. 10.* a messenger of death that has in it an uncommon strength and terror; weakned by the harbingers of death which *devour the strength of his skin*, *i. e.* it shall bring rottenness into his bones, and consume them. *His confidence shall then be rooted out of his tabernacle*, *ver. 14. i. e.* All that he trusteth to for his support shall be taken from him, and he shall have nothing to rely upon, no not his own tabernacle. His own soul was his confidence, but that shall be rooted out of the tabernacle of the body, as a tree that cumbered the ground. Thy soul shall be required of thee.

(2.) See him dead, and see his case then with an eye of faith. (1.) He is then brought to the king of terrors. He was surrounded with terrors while he lived, *ver. 11:* and death was the king of all those terrors, they fought against the sinner in death's name,



for it is by reason of death, that sinners are *all their life-time subject to bondage*, Heb. ii. 15. and at length they will be brought to that which they so long feared, as a captive to the conqueror. Death is terrible to nature, our Saviour himself prayed, *Father, save me from this hour*; but to the wicked it is in a special manner the king of terrors, both as it is a period to that life in which they placed their happiness, and a passage to that life where they will find their endless misery. How happy then are the saints, and how much indebted to the Lord Jesus, by whom death is so far abolished, and the property of it altered, that this king of terrors is become a friend and servant? (2.) He is then *driven from light into darkness*, ver. 18. From the light of this world, and his prosperous condition in it, into darkness, the darkness of the grave, the darkness of hell, into utter darkness, never to see light, *Psal. xlix. 19.* not the least gleam, nor any hopes of it. (3.) He is then chased out of the world, hurried and dragged away by the messengers of death fore against his will; chased as Adam out of paradise, for the world is his paradise. It intimates that he would fain stay here, he is loth to depart, but go he must: all the world is weary of him, and therefore chafeth him out, as glad to be rid of him. This is death to a wicked man.

3. See his family sunk and cut off, *ver. 15.* The wrath and curse of God light and lie not only upon his head and heart, but upon his house too, to consume it with the *timber and stones thereof*, Zech. v. 4. Death it self shall dwell in his tabernacle, and having expelled him shall take possession of his house to the terror and destruction of all that he leaves behind; even the dwelling shall be ruined for the sake of its owner, *brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation*, rained upon it as upon Sodom, to the destruction of which this seems to have reference. And some think he here upbraids Job with the burning of his sheep and servants with fire from heaven. The reason is here given why his tabernacle is thus marked for ruin, because it is none of his, *i. e.* It was unjustly got, and kept from the rightful owner, and therefore let him not expect either the comfort or the continuance of it.

His children shall perish either with him or after him, *ver. 16.* So that his roots being in his own person *dried up beneath, above his branch*, every child of his family shall be cut off. Thus the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab, were cut off, none that descended from them were left alive. They who take root in the earth may expect it will thus be dried up; but if we be rooted in Christ, even our leaf shall not wither, much less shall our branch be cut off. Those who consult the true honour of their family, and the welfare of its branches, will be afraid of withering it by sin. The extirpation of the sinner's family is mentioned again, *ver. 19.* *He shall neither have son nor nephew, child nor grandchild, to enjoy his estate, and bear up his name, nor shall there be any remaining in his dwelling akin to him.* Sin entails a curse upon posterity, and the iniquity of the fathers is often visited upon the children. Herein also it is probable, Bildad reflects upon the death of Job's children and servants, as a farther proof of his being a wicked man, whereas all that are written childless, are not thereby written graceless; there is a name better than that of sons and daughters.

4. See his memory buried with him, or made odious; he shall either be forgotten, or spoken of with dishonour, *ver. 17.* *His remembrance shall perish from the earth*, and if it perish from thence it perisheth wholly, for it was never written in heaven, as the names of the saints are, *Luke x. 20.* All his honour shall be laid and lost in the dust, or stained with perpetual infamy, so that he shall have no name in the street, departing without being desired. Thus the judgments of God follow him after death in this world, as an indication of the misery his soul is in after death, and an earnest of that everlasting shame and contempt to which he shall rise in the great day. *The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot*, Prov. x. 7.

5. See an universal amazement at his fall, *ver. 20.* They that see it are affrighted, so sudden is the change, so dreadful the execution, so threatening to all about him: and they that come after and hear the report of it are astonished at it: their ears are made to tingle, and their hearts to tremble, and they cry out, *Lord, how terrible art thou in thy judgments!* A place or person utterly ruined is said to be *made an astonishment*, Deut. xxviii. 37. 2 Chron. vii. 21. Jer. xxv. 9, 18. Horrible sins bring strange punishments.

Lastly, See all this averred as the unanimous sense of the patriarchal age, grounded upon their knowledge of God, and their many observations of his providence, *ver. 21.* *Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place, this the condition, of him that knows not God!* See here what is the beginning and what is the end of the wickedness of this wicked world. (1.) The beginning of it is ignorance of God, and it is a wilful ignorance, for there is that to be known of him which is sufficient to leave them for ever inexcusable. They know not God, and then they go all to nought, Pharaoh knows not the Lord, and therefore will not obey his voice. (2.) The end of it, and that is utter destruction. Such, so miserable, are the dwellings of the wicked. Vengeance will be taken of those that *know not God*, 2 Thes. i. 8. For those whom he has not honour from,

he will get him honour upon: let us therefore stand in awe and not sin, for it will certainly be bitterness in the latter end.

## C H A P. XIX.

*This chapter is Job's answer to Bildad's discourse in the foregoing chapter. Tho' his spirit was grieved and much heated, and Bildad was very peevish, yet he gave him leave to say all he designed to say, and did not break in upon him in the midst of his argument; but when he had done, gave him a fair answer, in which, 1. He complains of unkind usage. And very unkindly he takes it, (1.) That his comforters added to his affliction, ver. 2—7. (2.) That his God was the author of his affliction, ver. 8—12. (3.) That his relations and friends were strange to him, and shy of him in his affliction, ver. 13—19. (4.) That he had no compassion shewed him in his affliction, ver. 20—22. 2. He comforts himself with the believing hopes of happiness in the other world, tho' he had so little comfort in this, making a very solemn confession of his faith, with a desire it might be recorded as an evidence of his sincerity, ver. 23—27. 3. He concludes with a caution to his friends not to persist in their hard censures of him, ver. 28, 29. If the remonstrance Job here makes of his grievances may serve sometimes to justify our complaints, yet his cheerful views of the future state at the same time may shame us Christians, and may serve to silence our complaints, or at least to balance them.*

1. **T**HEN Job answered and said, 2. How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? 3. These ten times have ye reproached me: you are not ashamed that you make your selves strange to me. 4. And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with my self. 5. If indeed you will magnifie your selves against me, and plead against my reproach: 6. Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net. 7. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.

Job's friends had passed a very severe censure upon him as a wicked man, because he was so grievously afflicted, now here he tells them how ill he took it to be so censured. Bildad had twice began with a *how long*, chap. xviii. 2. and therefore Job being now to answer him particularly, begins with a *how long* too, *ver. 2.* What is not liked is commonly thought long, but Job had more reason to think them long who assailed him, than they had to think him long who only vindicated himself. Better cause may be shewn for defending our selves, if we have right on our side, than for offending our brethren, tho' we have right on our side. Now observe here,

1. How he describes their unkindness to him, and what account he gives of it. (1.) They vexed his soul, and that is more grievous than the vexation of the bones, *Psal. vi. 2, 3.* They were his friends, they came to comfort him, pretended to counsel him for the best, but with a great deal of gravity, and affectation of wisdom and piety, they set themselves to rob him of the only comfort he had now left him in a good God, a good conscience, and a good name; and this vexed him to the heart. (2.) They broke him in pieces with words, and those were hard words sure, and very cruel ones, that would break a man to pieces: they grieved him, and so broke him, and therefore there will be a reckoning hereafter for all the hard speeches spoken against Christ and his people, *Jude 15.* (3.) They reproached him, *ver. 3.* gave him an ill character, put him into an ill name, and laid to his charge things that he knew not. To an ingenuous mind reproach is a cutting thing. (4.) They made themselves strange to him, were shy of him now he was in his troubles, took on them, they did not know him, *chap. ii. 12.* were not free with him as they used to be when he was in his prosperity. Those are governed by the spirit of the world, and not by any principles of true honour, or love, who make themselves strange to their friends, or God's friends, when they are in trouble: *a friend loves at all times.* (5.) They not only estranged themselves from him, but magnified themselves against him, *ver. 5.* not only looked shy of him, but looked big upon him, and insulted over him, magnifying themselves to depress him. It is a mean thing, it is an ill thing, thus to trample upon those that are down. (6.) They pleaded against him his reproach, *i. e.* they made use of his affliction as an argument against him to prove him a wicked man. They should have pleaded for him his integrity, and helped him to take the comfort of that under his affliction, and so have pleaded that against his reproach, as St Paul, 2 Cor. i. 12. but instead of that they pleaded his reproach against his integrity, which was not only unkind, but very unjust; for where shall we find an honest man if reproach may be admitted for a plea against him?

2. How he aggravates their unkindness. (1.) They had thus abused him often, *ver. 3.* *These ten times ye have reproached me,* *i. e.*



i. e. very often, as *Gen. xxxi. 7. Num. xiv. 22.* Five times they had spoken, and every speech was a double reproach. He spoke as if he had kept a particular account of their reproaches, and could tell just how many they were; and it is but a peevish and unfriendly thing to do so, and looks like a design of retaliation and revenge: we better befriend our own peace by forgetting injuries and unkindnesses, than by booking them and scoring them up. (2.) They continued still to do it, and seemed resolved to perish in it. How long will ye do it? *ver. 2. and ver. 5.* I see you will magnify your selves against me, notwithstanding all I have said in mine own justification. Many times those that speak too much, yet never think they have said enough; and when the mouth is opened in passion, the ear is shut to reason. (3.) They were not ashamed of what they did, *ver. 3.* They had reason to be ashamed to their hard-heartedness, so ill becoming men, and their uncharitableness, so ill becoming good men, and their deceitfulness, so ill becoming friends: but were they ashamed? No, tho' they were told of it again and again, yet they could not blush.

3. How he answers their harsh censures, by shewing them that what they condemned was capable of excuse, which they ought to have considered.

1. The errors of his judgment were excusable, *ver. 4. Be it indeed that I have erred*, that I am in the wrong through ignorance or mistake, which may well be supposed concerning men, concerning good men, *Humanum est errare*, and we must be willing to suppose it concerning our selves. It is folly to think our selves infallible: but be it so, said Job, *mine error remaineth with my self, i. e.* I speak according to the best of my judgment, with all sincerity, and not from a spirit of contradiction. Or, if I be in an error, I keep it to my self, and do not impose it upon others as you do; I only prove my self and my own work by it, I meddle not with other people, either to teach them, or to judge them. Mens errors are the more excusable if they keep them to themselves, and do not disturb others with them. *Hast thou faith? Have it to thy self.* Some give this sense of these words; if I be in an error, it is I that must smart for it, and therefore you need not concern your selves: nay, it is I that do smart, and smart severely for it, and therefore you need not add to my misery by your reproaches.

2. The breakings out of his passion, though not justifiable, yet were excusable, considering the vastness of his grief, and the extremity of his misery. If you will go on to cavil at every complaining word I speak, will make the worst of it, and improve it against me, yet take the cause of the complaint along with you, and weigh that before you pass a judgment upon the complaint, and turn it to my reproach: *know then that God has overcome me, ver. 6.* Three things he would have them consider (1.) That his trouble was very great. He was overthrown, and could not help himself, inclosed as in a net, and could not get out. (2.) That God was the author of it, and that in it he fought against him: it was his hand that overthrew me; it is in his net that I am enclosed, and therefore you need not appear against me thus, I have enough to do to grapple with God's displeasure, let me not have your's also. Let God's controversy with me be ended for pity, before you begin your's. It is barbarous to persecute him whom God had smitten, and talk to the grief of one whom he hath wounded, *Psal. lxxix. 26.* (3.) That he could not obtain any hope of the redress of his grievances, *ver. 7.* He complained of his pain but got no ease, begged to know the cause of his affliction, but could not discover it, appealed to God's tribunal for the clearing of his innocency, but could not obtain a hearing, much less a judgment, upon his appeal. *I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard.* God for a time may seem to turn away his ear from his people, to be angry at their prayers, and overlook their appeals to him, and they must be excused if in that case they complain bitterly. Wo unto us if God be against us.

8. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths. 9. He had stript me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. 10. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree. 11. He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him, as one of his enemies. 12. His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle. 13. He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. 14. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. 15. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids count me for a stranger: I am an aliant in their sight. 16. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer: I intreated him with my mouth. 17. My breath his strange to my wife, though I intreated for the childrens sake of mine own body. 18. Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. 19. All my inward friends

abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. 20. My bone cleaveth to my skin, and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. 21. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me. 22. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?

Bildad had very disingenuously perverted Job's complaints, by making them the description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, and yet he repeats them here to move their pity, and to work upon their good nature, if they had any left in them.

1. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure which he was under, and which infused the wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery: how doleful are the accents of his complaint, *ver. 11. He hath kindled his wrath against me*, which flames and terrifies me; which burns and pains me? What is the fire of hell but the wrath of God? Seared consciences will feel it shortly, but do not fear it now. Enlightned consciences fear it now, but shall not feel it shortly. Job's present apprehension was, that God counted him as one of his enemies, and yet, at the same time, God loved him, and gloried in him as his faithful friend. It is a gross mistake, but a very common one, to think that whom God afflicts he treats as his enemies; whereas, on the contrary, as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens: it is the discipline of his sons.

Which way soever Job looked, he thought he saw the tokens of God's displeasure against him.

(1.) Did he look back upon his former prosperity? he saw God's hand putting an end to that, *ver. 9. He has stript me of my glory*, my wealth, honour, power, and all the opportunity I had of doing good; my children were my glory, but I have lost them; and whatever was a crown to my head he has taken it from me, and has laid all mine honour in the dust. See the vanity of worldly glory, it is what we may be soon stript of: and whatever strips us we must see and own God's hand in it, and comply with his design.

(2.) Did he look down upon his present troubles? He saw God giving them their commission, and their orders to attack him. They are his troops, that act by his direction, which encamp against me, *ver. 12.* It did not so much trouble him that his miseries came upon him in troops, as that they were God's troops, in whom it seemed as if God fought against him, and intended his destruction. God's troops encamped round his tabernacle, as soldiers lay siege to a strong city, cutting off all provisions from being brought into it, and battering it continually: thus was Job's tabernacle besieged. Time was when God's hosts encamped round him for his safety, *hast thou not made a hedge about him?* Now, on the contrary, they surrounded him to his terror, and destroyed him on every side, *ver. 10.*

(3.) Did he look forward for deliverance, he saw the hand of God cutting off all hopes of that, *ver. 8. He had fenced up my way that I cannot pass*, I have now no way left to help my self, either to extricate my self out of my troubles, or to ease my self under them. Would I make any motion, take any steps towards deliverance, I find my way hedged up, I cannot do what I would: nay, if I would please my self with the prospect of a deliverance hereafter, I cannot do it, it is not only out of my reach, but out of my sight, God hath set darkness in my paths, and there is none to tell me how long, *Psal. lxxiv. 9.* He concludes, *ver. 10.* I am gone, quite lost and undone for this world, my hope hath he removed like a tree, cut down, or plucked up by the roots, which will never grow again. Hope in this life is a perishing thing, but the hope of good men, when it is cut off from this world, is but removed like a tree, transplanted from this nursery to the garden of the Lord. We shall have no reason to complain, if God thus remove our hopes from the sand to the rock, from things temporal to things eternal.

2. He complains of the unkindness of his relations, and of all his old acquaintance. In this also he owns the hand of God, *ver. 13. He hath put my brethren far from me, i. e.* He has laid those afflictions upon me which frighten them from me, and make them stand aloof from my sores. As it was their sin, God was not the author of it, it is Satan that alienates mens minds from their brethren in affliction; but as it was Job's trouble, God ordered it for the completing of his trial: as we must eye the hand of God in all the injuries we receive from our enemies, the Lord has bidden Shimei curse David, so also in all the flights and unkindnesses we receive from our friends, which will help us to bear them the more patiently. Every creature is that to us (kind or unkind, comfortable or uncomfortable) which God makes it to be: yet this doth not excuse Job's relations and friends from the guilt of horrid ingratitude and injustice to him, which he had reason to complain of: few could have born it so well as he did. He takes notice of the unkindness,

(1.) Of his kindred and acquaintance, his neighbours, and such as he had formerly been familiar with, who were bound by all the laws of friendship and civility to concern themselves for him,



to visit him, and enquire after him, and to be ready to do him all the good offices that lay in their power, yet these were *estranged from him*, ver. 13. they took no more care about him, than if he had been a stranger whom they never knew. His kinsfolk that called him cousin, and claimed relation to him when he was in prosperity, now failed him, they came short of their former professions of friendship to him, and his present expectations of kindness from them. Even his familiar friends, whom he was mindful of, had now forgotten him, had forgotten both his former friendliness to them, and his present miseries: they had heard of his troubles and designed him a visit, but truly they forgot it, so little affected were they with it.

Nay, his inward friends, the men of his secret, whom he was most intimate with, and laid in his bosom, not only forgot him, but abhorred him, kept as far off him as they could, because he was poor and could not entertain them as he used to do, and because he was sore and a loathsome spectacle: those whom he loved, and who therefore were worse than publicans if they did not love him now he was in distress, not only turned from him, but were turned against him, and did all they could to make him odious, so to justify themselves in being so strange to him, ver. 19. So uncertain is the friendship of men, but if God be our friend, he will not fail us in a time of need. But let none that pretend either to humanity or christianity, ever use their friends as Job's friends used him: adversity is the proof of friendship.

2. Of his domesticks and family relations: sometimes indeed we find that, beyond our expectation, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; but—ordinarily the master of a family expects to be attended on, and taken care of by those of his family, even then when through weakness of body or mind he is become despicable to others. But poor Job was misused by his own family, and some of his worst foes were those of his own house. He mentions not his children, they were all dead, and we may suppose that the unkindness of his surviving relations made him lament the death of his children so much the more: if they had been alive (would he think) I should have had comfort in them. As for those that were now about him,

(1.) His own servants slighted him: his maids did not attend him in his illness, but *counted him for a stranger and an alien*, ver. 15. His other servants never heeded him, if he called to them they would not come at his call, but took on them they did not hear him. If he asked them a question they would not vouchsafe to *give him an answer*, ver. 16. Job had been a good master to them, and did not *despise their cause when pleaded with him*, chap. xxxi. 13. and yet they were rude to him now, and despised his cause when he pleaded with them. We must not think it strange if we receive ill at the hand of those from whom we have deserved well. Tho' he was now sickly, yet he was not cross with his servants, and imperious, as is too common, but he intreated his servant with his mouth, when he had authority to command, and yet he would not be civil to him, neither kind nor just. Note, Those that are sick and in sorrow are apt to take things ill, and be jealous of a slight, and to lay to heart the least unkindness done to them: when Job was in affliction, even his servants neglect of him troubled him.

(2.) But one would think when all forsook him, the wife of his bosom should have been tender of him: no, because he would not curse God and die, as she persuaded him, his breath was strange to her too, she did not care for coming near him, nor took any notice of what he said, ver. 17. Tho' he spoke to her, not with the authority, but with the tenderness, of a husband, did not command, but intreated her by that conjugal love which their children were the pledges of, yet she regarded him not. Some read it, tho' I lamented, or bemoaned my self for the children, *i. e.* for the death of the children of my own body; an affliction in which she was equally concerned with him. Now it appeared the devil spared her to him, not only to be his tempter, but to be his tormenter. By what she said to him at first, *curse God and die*, it appeared she had little religion in her; and what can one expect that is kind and good from those that have not the fear of God before their eyes, and are not governed by conscience?

(3.) Even the little children, that were born in his house the children of his own servants, who were his servants by birth, despised him, and spoke against him, ver. 18. though he arose in civility to speak friendly to them, or with authority to check them; they let him know, that they neither feared him, nor loved him.

3. He complains of the decay of his body, all the beauty and strength of that was gone. When those about him slighted him, if he had been in health, and at ease, he might have enjoyed himself. But he could take as little pleasure in himself, as others took in him, ver. 20. *My bone cleaves now to my skin*, as formerly it did to my flesh; this was it that filled him with wrinkles, chap. xvi. 8. he was a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Nay, his skin too was almost gone, little remained unbroken but the skin of his teeth, his gums, and perhaps his lips, all the rest was fetched off by his sore boils. See what little reason we have to indulge the body, which after all our care may be thus consumed by the diseases which it has in it self the seeds of.

Lastly, Upon all these accounts he recommends himself to the compassion of his friends, and justly blames their harshness with him: from this remonstrance of his deplorable case, it was easy to infer,

1. That they ought to *pity him*, ver. 21. This he begs in the most moving melting language that could be, enough (one would think) to break a heart of stone: *have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends*; if you will do nothing else for me, be sorry for me, and shew some concern for me; *have pity upon me, for the hand of God hath touched me*; my case is sad indeed, for I am fallen into the hands of the living God, my spirit is touched with the sense of his wrath, a calamity of all other the most piteous. Note, It becomes friends to pity one another when they are in any trouble, and not shut up the bowels of compassion.

2. That however, they ought not to persecute him, if they would not ease his affliction by their pity, yet they must not be so barbarous as to add to it by their censures and reproaches, ver. 22. *Why do ye persecute me as God?* Sure his rebukes are enough for one man to bear, you need not add your wormwood and gall to the cup of affliction he puts into my hand, it is bitter enough without that, God has a sovereign power over me, and may do what he pleaseth with me, but do you think that you may do so too? No, we must aim to be like the most holy, and the most merciful, but not like the most high, and most mighty. God gives not account of any of his matters, but we must. If they did delight in his calamity, let them be satisfied with his flesh, which was wasted and gone, but let them not, as if that were too little, wound his spirit, and ruin his good name. Great tenderness is owing to those that are in affliction, especially to those that are troubled in mind.

23. Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! 24. That they were graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever! 25. For I know *that* my Redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. 26. And *though* after my skin, *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27. Whom I shall see for my self, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me. 28. But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me? 29. Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath *bringeth* the punishments of the sword, that ye may know *there is* a judgment.

In all the conferences between Job and his friends, we do not find any more weighty and considerable lines than these; would one have expected it? Here is a great deal both of Christ and heaven in these verses: and he that said such things as these, *declared plainly that he sought the better country; that is, the heavenly*; as the patriarchs of that age did, *Heb. xi. 14*. We have here Job's creed, or confession of faith; his belief in God the Father almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and the principles of natural religion, he had often professed: but here we find him no stranger to revealed religion; tho' the revelation of the promised seed, and the promised inheritance, was then but discerned like the dawning of the day, yet Job was taught of God to believe in a living Redeemer, and to *look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come*, for of these doubts he must be understood: these were the things he comforted himself with the expectation of, and not a deliverance from his trouble, or revival of his happiness in this world, as some would understand him. For besides that, the expressions he here useth of the Redeemer's *standing at the latter day upon the earth*, of his seeing God, and *seeing him for himself*, are wretchedly forced, if they be understood of any temporal deliverance; it is very plain that he had no expectation at all of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. He had just now said, that *his way was fenced up*, ver. 8. and his *hope removed like a tree*, ver. 10. Nay, and after this he expressed his despair of any comfort in this life, chap. xxiii. 8, 9.—xxx. 23. So that we must necessarily understand him of the redemption of his soul from the power of the grave, and his reception to glory, which is spoken of, *Psal. xlix. 15*. We have reason to think that Job was just now under an extraordinary impulse of the blessed Spirit, which raised him above himself, gave him light, and gave him utterance, even to his own surprize. And some observe, that after this we do not find in Job's discourses such passionate, peevish, unbecoming complaints of God and his providence, as we have before met with: this hope quieted his spirit, stilled the storm, and having here cast anchor within the veil, his mind kept steady from this time forward. Let us observe,

1. To what intent Job makes this confession of his faith here; never did any thing come in more pertinently, or, to better purpose. (1.) Job was now accused, and this was his appeal. His friends reproached him as an hypocrite, and contemned him as a wicked man, but he appeals to his creed, to his faith, to his hope, and to his own conscience; which not only acquitted him



him from reigning sin, but comforted him with the expectation of a blessed resurrection: *these are not the words of him that has a devil. He appeals to the coming of the Redeemer*, from this wrangle at the bar, to the judgment of the bench, even to him to whom all judgment is committed, who he knew would right him. The consideration of God's day coming, will make it a *very small thing with us to be judged of mans judgment*, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. How easily may we bear the unjust calumnies and reproaches of men, while we expect the glorious appearance of our Redeemer, and his redeemed, at the last day; and that there will then be a resurrection of names, as well as bodies. (2.) Job was now afflicted, and this was his cordial; when he was pressed above measure, this kept him from fainting, he believed that he should *see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*; not in this world, for that is the land of the dying.

2. With what a solemn preface he introduceth it, *ver. 23, 24.* He breaks off his complaints abruptly, to triumph in his comforts; which he doth, not only for his own satisfaction, but for the edification of others. Those now about him he feared would little regard what he said, and so it proved; he therefore wished it might be recorded for the generations to come. *O that my words were now written!* the words I am now about to say, *q. d.* I own I have spoken many unadvised words, which I could wish might be forgotten, for they will neither do me credit, nor do others good. But I am now going to speak deliberately, and that which I desire may be published to all the world, and preserved for the generations to come, *in perpetuum rei memoriam*, and therefore that it may be written plain, and printed, or drawn out in large and legible characters, so that he that runs may read it; and that it may not be left in loose papers, but put into a book; or, if that should perish, that it may be engraven like an inscription upon a monument, *with an iron pen in lead, or in the stone*; let the engraver use all his art to make it durable, and a lasting appeal to posterity. That which Job here somewhat passionately wished for, God graciously granted him; his words are written, they are printed in God's book; so that wherever that book is read, there shall this be told for a memorial concerning Job, he believed, therefore he spoke.

3. What his confession it self is; what are the words which he would have to be written, we here have them written, *ver. 25, 26, 27.* let us observe them.

1. He believes *the glory of the Redeemer*, and his own interest in him, *ver. 25.* *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, he is in being, and is my life, and that he shall stand at last, or stand the last, or at the latter day upon (or above) the earth. He shall be raised up, or he shall be (at the latter day, *i. e.* in the fulness of time. The gospel day is called the last time, because that is the last dispensation) upon the earth. So it points at his incarnation; or, he shall be lifted up from the earth. So it points at his crucifixion; or, raised up out of the earth. So it is applicable to his resurrection; or, as we commonly understand it, at the end of time he shall appear over the earth, *for he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him*, so close shall he come to this earth. He shall stand upon the dust, so the word is; upon all his enemies, which shall be put as dust under his feet, and he shall tread upon them and triumph over them.

Observe here, 1. That there is a Redeemer provided for fallen man, and Jesus Christ is that Redeemer. The word is Goël, which is used for the next of kin to whom, by the law of Moses, the right of redeeming a mortgaged estate did belong, *Lev. xxv. 25.* Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin, we are our selves utterly unable to redeem it, Christ is near of kin to us, the next kinsman that is able to redeem, he has paid our debt, satisfied God's justice for sin, and so has taken off the mortgage, and made a new settlement of the inheritance! Our persons also want a Redeemer, we are sold for sin, and sold under sin, our Lord Jesus has wrought out a redemption for us, and proclaims redemption to us, and so he is truly the Redeemer.

2. He is a living Redeemer: as we are made by a living God, so we are saved by a living Redeemer, who is both almighty and eternal, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost. *Of him it is witnessed that he liveth*, Heb. vii. 8. Rev. i. 18. We are dying, but he liveth, and hath assured us, that *because he lives we shall live also*, John xiv. 19. 3. There are those that through grace have an interest in this Redeemer, and can, upon good grounds call him theirs. When Job had lost all his wealth, and all his friends, yet he was not separated from Christ, nor cut off from his relation to him, still he is my Redeemer. That next kinsman stuck to him when all his other kindred forsook him, and he had the comfort of it. 4. Our interest in the Redeemer is a thing that may be known, and where it is known may be triumphed in, as sufficient to balance all our griefs. *I know.* Observe with what an air of assurance he speaks it, as one confident of this very thing, *I know that my Redeemer lives.* His friends had often charged him with ignorance or vain knowledge, but he knows enough, and knows to good purpose, who knows Christ to be his Redeemer. 5. There will be a latter day, a last day, a day when *time shall be no more*, Rev. x. 6. That is a day we are concerned to think of every day. 6. Our Redeemer will at that day stand upon the earth, or over the earth, to summon the dead out of their graves, and determine them to an unchangeable

state, for to him all judgment is committed. He shall stand the last on the dust to which this earth will be reduced by the conflagration.

2. He believes the happiness of the redeemed, and his own title to that happiness, that at Christ's second coming believers shall be raised up in glory, and so made perfectly blessed in the vision and fruition of God, and this he believes with application to him self.

1. He counts upon the corrupting of his body in the grave, and speaks of it with a holy carelessness and unconcernedness, though *after my skin* (which is already wasted and gone, none of it remaining but *the skin of my teeth*, ver. 20.) *they destroy*, (they that are appointed to destroy it, the grave, and the worms in it, of whom he had spoken, chap. xvii. 14.) *this body*. The word *body* is added: tho' they destroy this, this skeleton, this shadow, (chap. xvii. 7.) this that I lay my hand upon, or (pointing perhaps to his weak and withered limbs) this that you see, call it what you will, I expect that shortly it will be a feast for the worms. Christ's body saw not corruption, but ours must! and Job mentions this that the glory of the resurrection he believed and hoped for might shine the more bright. Note, It is good for us often to think not only of the approaching death of our bodies, but of their destruction and dissolution in the grave, yet let not that discourage our hope of their resurrection, for the same power that made man's body at first out of common dust can raise it out of its own dust. This body we now take such care about, and make such provision for, will in a little time be destroyed, even *my reins* (saith Job) *shall be consumed within me*, ver. 27. the innermost part of the body which perhaps putrefies first.

2. He comforts himself with the hopes of happiness on the other side death and the grave. *After I shall awake* (so the margin reads it) *though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God.*

1. Soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave shall be raised again a glorious body, yet in my flesh I shall see God: the separate soul has eyes wherewith to see God, eyes of the mind; but Job speaks of seeing him with eyes of flesh, in my flesh, with mine eyes, the same body that died shall rise again, a true body, but a glorified body, fit for the employments and entertainments of that world; and therefore a *spiritual body*, 1 Cor. xv. 44. Let us therefore glorify God with our bodies, because there is such a glory designed for them.

2. Job and God shall come together again; *in my flesh shall I see God*, *i. e.* the glorified Redeemer, who is God. *I shall see God in my flesh*, so some read it: the Son of God clothed with a body which will be visible even to eyes of flesh. Tho' the body in the grave seem despicable and miserable, yet it shall be dignified and made happy in the vision of God. Job now complained that he could not get a sight of God, chap. xxiii. 8, 9. but hopes to see him shortly, never more to lose the sight of him, and that sight of him will be the more welcome after the present darkness and distance. Note, It is the blessedness of the blessed that they shall see God, shall see him as he is, see him face to face, and no longer through a glass, darkly. See with what pleasure holy Job enlargeth upon this, *ver. 27.* *Whom I shall see for my self*, *i. e.* see and enjoy, see to my own unspeakable comfort and satisfaction: I shall see him as mine, as mine with an appropriating sight, *Rev. xxi. 3.* *God himself shall be with them, and be their God*, they shall be *like him*, *for they shall see him as he is*, that is seeing for themselves, 1 *Job. iii. 3.* Mine eyes shall behold him and not another. (1.) He, and not another for him, shall be seen, not a type or figure of him, but he himself. Glorified saints are perfectly sure that they are not imposed upon, it is no *deceptio visus*. (2.) I, and not another for me, shall see him. Though my flesh and body be consumed yet I shall not need a proxy, I shall see him with my own eyes. This was what Job hoped for, and what he earnestly desired, which some think is the meaning of the last clause, *my reins are spent in my bosom*, *i. e.* All my desires are summed up and concluded in this, this will crown and compleat them all; let me have this, and I shall have nothing more to desire, it is enough, it is all, with this the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

4. The application of this to his friends. His creed spoke comfort to himself, but warning and terror to them that set themselves against him.

1. It was a word of caution to them, not to proceed and persist in their unkind usage of him, *ver. 28.* He had reproved them for what they had said, and now tells them what they should say for the reducing of themselves and one another to a better temper. Why persecute we him thus? why do we grieve him and vex him, by censuring and condemning him, seeing the root of the matter, or the root of the word, is found in him? Let this direct us (1.) In our care concerning our selves. We are all concerned to see to it, that the root of the matter be found in us. A living, quickning, commanding principle of grace in the heart is the root of the matter, as necessary to our religion as the root to the tree, to which it owes both its fixedness and its fruitfulness: love to God and our brethren, faith in Christ, hatred of sin, this is the root of the matter, other things are



but leaves in comparison with this; serious godliness is the one thing needful. (2.) In our carriage towards our brethren. We are to believe that many have the root of the matter in them, who are not in every thing of our mind, who have their follies and weaknesses, and mistakes: and, to conclude, it is at our peril if we persecute any such. Wo be to him that offends one of those little ones, God will resent and revenge it. Job and his friends differed in some notions concerning the methods of providence, but they agreed in the root of the matter, the belief of another world, and therefore should not persecute one another for these differences.

2. It was a word of terror to them. Christ's second coming will be very dreadful to those that are found *smiting their fellow servants*, Matth. xxiv. 49. and therefore, *ver. 29. Be ye afraid of the sword*, the flaming sword of God's justice which turns every way: fear, lest you make yourselves obnoxious to it. Good men need to be frightened from sin by the terrors of the Almighty, particularly from the sin of rash judging their brethren, *Matth. vii. 1. Jam. iii. 1.* Those that are peevish and passionate with their brethren, censorious of them, and malicious towards them, let them know, not only that their wrath, whatever it pretends, works not the righteousness of God. But, (1.) They may expect to smart for it in this world; *it brings the punishments of the sword*: wrath leads to such crimes as expose men to the sword of the magistrate; however, God often takes vengeance for it, and those that shewed no mercy shall find no mercy. (2.) If they repent not, that will be an earnest of worse. By these you may know there is a judgment, not only a present government, but a future judgment, in which hard speeches must be accounted for.

## C H A P. XX.

One would have thought that such an excellent confession of faith as Job made in the close of the foregoing chapter should have satisfied his friends, or, at least, have mollified them; but they do not seem to have taken any notice of it, and therefore Zophar here takes his turn, enters the lists with Job, and attacks him with as much vehemence as before. (1.) His preface is short, but hot, *ver. 2, 3.* (2.) His discourse is long, and all upon one subject, the very same that Bildad was large upon, chap. xviii. the certain misery of wicked people, and the ruin that awaits them. 1. He asserts in general, that the prosperity of the wicked is short, and their ruin sure, *ver. 4—9.* 2. He proves the misery of his condition by many instances. That he should have a diseased body, a troubled conscience, a ruined estate, a beggared family, an infamous name, and he himself shall perish under the weight of divine wrath: all this is most curiously described here in lofty expressions, and lively similitudes, and it often proves true in this world, and always in another, without repentance, *ver. 10—29.* But the great mistake was, and (as bishop Patrick expresseth it) all the flaw in his discourse (which was common to him with the rest) that he imagined God never varied from this method, and therefore Job was without doubt a very bad man, tho' it did not appear he was, any other way but by his infelicity.

1. **T**HEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, 2. Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer. 4. Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, 5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? 6. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds: 7. Yet he shall perish for ever, like his own dung: they which have seen him, shall say, where is he? 8. He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. 9. The eye also which saw him, shall see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him.

Here, 1. Zophar begins very passionately, and seems to be in a great heat at what Job had said. Being resolved to condemn Job for an ill man, he was much displeased that he talked so like a good man, and, as it should seem, broke in upon him, and began abruptly, *ver. 2. Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer.* He takes no notice of what Job had said to move their pity, or to evidence his own integrity, but fastens upon the reproof he gave them in the close of his discourse, counts that a reproach, and thinks himself therefore obliged to answer, because Job had bid them be afraid of the sword, that he might not seem to be frightened by his menaces. The best counsel is too often ill taken from an antagonist, and therefore usually may be as well spared. Zophar seemed more in haste to speak than became a wise man, but he excuseth it with two things. (1.) That Job had given him a strong provocation, *ver. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach*, and cannot bear to hear it any longer. Job's friends, I doubt, had spirits too high to deal with a man in his low condition, and high spirits are impatient of contradiction, but think themselves affronted if all about them do not say as they say:

they cannot bear a check, but they call it the check of their reproach, and then they are bound in honour to return it, if not to draw upon him that gave it. (2.) That his own heart gave him a strong instigation. His thoughts caused him to answer, *ver. 2.* for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; but he fathers it, *ver. 3.* upon the spirit of his understanding: that indeed should cause us to answer, we should rightly apprehend a thing, and duly consider it before we speak to it; but whether it did so here or no is a question: men often mistake the dictates of their passion for the dictates of their reason, and therefore think they do well to be angry.

(2.) Zophar proceeds very plainly to shew the ruin and destruction of wicked people, insinuating that because Job was destroyed and ruined, he was certainly a wicked man, and an hypocrite. Observe,

1. How this doctrine is introduced, *ver. 4.* where he appeals, (1.) To Job's own knowledge and conviction, *knowest thou not this?* Canst thou be ignorant of a truth so plain? or canst thou doubt of a truth which has been confirmed by the suffrage of all mankind? Those know little, who do not know that the wages of sin is death. (2.) To the experience of all ages. It was known of old since man was placed upon the earth, *i. e.* Ever since man was made he has had this truth written in his heart, that the sin of sinners will be their ruin; and ever since there were instances of wickedness (which there were soon after man was placed on the earth) there were instances of the punishments of it, witness the exclusions of Adam and Cain. When sin entered into the world death entered with it: all the world knows that evil pursues sinners, that *vengeance suffers not to live*, Acts xxviii. 4. and subscribes to that, *Isa. iii. 11. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him*, sooner or later.

2. How it is laid down, *ver. 5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.* Observe, 1. He asserts the misery not only of those that are openly wicked and profane, but of hypocrites, who secretly practise wickedness under a shew and profession of religion, because such a wicked man he looked upon Job to be, and it is true, that a form of godliness, if it be made use of for a cloke of maliciousness, doth but make ill worse; dissembled piety is double iniquity, and the ruin that attends it will be accordingly. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites, as our Saviour intimates, *Matth. xxiv. 51.* 2. He grants that wicked men may for a time prosper, may be secure and easy, and very merry, you may see them in triumph and joy, triumphing and rejoicing in their wealth and power, their grandeur and success, triumphing and rejoicing over their poor honest neighbours whom they vex and oppress: they feel no evil, they fear none. Job's friends were loth to own at first that wicked people might prosper at all, *chap. iv. 9.* until Job proved it plainly, *chap. ix. 24—xii. 6.* and now Zophar yields it: but, 3. He lays it down for a certain truth, that they will not prosper long. Their joy is but for a moment, and will quickly end in endless sorrow: tho' he be never so great, and rich, and jovial, he will be humbled and mortified, and made miserable.

3. How it is illustrated, *ver. 6, &c.*

(1.) He supposeth his prosperity to be very high, as high as you can imagine, *ver. 6.* It is not his wisdom and virtue, but his worldly wealth and greatness that he accounts his excellency, and values himself by: we will suppose that to mount up to the heavens, and since his spirit always riseth with his condition, you may suppose that with it his head reacheth to the clouds. He is every way advanced, the world has done the utmost it can for him, he looks down upon all about him with disdain, while they look up to him with admiration, envy, or fear; we will suppose him to bid fair for an universal monarchy. And tho' he cannot but have made himself many enemies before he arrived to this pitch of prosperity, yet he thinks himself as much out of the reach of their darts as if he were in the clouds.

(2.) He is confident his ruin will accordingly be very great, and his fall the more dreadful for his having risen so high. *He shall perish for ever*, *ver. 7.* His pride and security were the certain prefaces of his misery. This will certainly be true of all impenitent sinners in the other world, they shall be undone, for ever undone; but Zophar means his ruin in this world: and sometimes indeed notorious sinners are remarkably cut off by present judgments, they have reason enough to fear what Zophar here threatens even the triumphant sinner with. (1.) A shameful destruction. He shall perish like his own dung, or dunghil, so loathsome is he to God and all good men, and so willing will the world be to part with him, *Psal. cxix. 119. Isa. lxvi. ult.* (2.) A surprising destruction. He will be brought into desolation in a moment, *Psal. lxxiii. 19.* So that those about him, that saw him but just now, will ask, *where is he?* Could he that made so great a figure vanish and expire so suddenly? (3.) A swift destruction, *ver. 8.* He shall fly away upon the wings of his own terrors, and be chased away by the just imprecations of all about him, who would gladly be rid of him. (4.) An utter destruction. It will be total, he shall go away like a dream, or vision of the night, which was a meer phantasm, and whatever in it pleased the fancy, it is quite gone, and nothing of it remains, but what serves us to laugh at the folly of. It will be final,



ver. 9. The eye that saw him and was ready to adore him, shall see him no more, and the place he filled shall no more behold him, having given him an eternal farewell when he went to his own place, as Judas, *Acts* i. 25.

10. His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods. 11. His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust. 12. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; 13. Though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth: 14. Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. 15. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly. 16. He shall suck the poison of asps: the vipers tongue shall slay him. 17. He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter. 18. That which he laboured for, shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down: according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein. 19. Because he hath oppressed, and hath forsaken the poor; because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not. 20. Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired. 21. There shall none of his meat be left; therefore shall no man look for his goods. 22. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits: every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.

The instances here given of the miserable condition of the wicked man in this world, are expressed with a great fulness and fluency of language, and the same thing returned to again, and repeated in other words. Let us therefore reduce the particulars to their proper heads, and observe,

1. What his wickedness is for which he is punished.

(1.) The lusts of the flesh, here called the sins of his youth, ver. 11. for those are the sins which in that age people are most tempted to. The forbidden pleasures of sense are said to be sweet in his mouth, ver. 12. he indulgeth himself in all the gratifications of the carnal appetite, and takes an inordinate complacency in them, as yielding the most agreeable delights. That is the satisfaction which he hides under his tongue and rolls there, as the most dainty delicate thing that can be: he keeps it still within his mouth, ver. 13. let him have that and he desires no more, he will never part with that for the spiritual and divine pleasures of religion, which he has no relish of nor affection for. His keeping it still in his mouth notes both his obstinate persisting in his sin, he spares it when he should kill and mortify it, and forsakes it not, but holds it fast, and goes on frowardly in it: and also his re-acting of his sin by revolving it, and remembring it with pleasure, as that adulterous woman, *Ezek.* xxiii. 19. that multiplied her whoredoms by calling to remembrance the days of her youth, so doth this wicked man here. Or his hiding it and keeping it under his tongue, notes his industrious concealment of his beloved lust: being an hypocrite, that he may save the credit of his profession, his haunts of sin are secret; but he that knows what is in the heart, knows what is under the tongue too, and will discover it shortly.

(2.) The love of the world, and the wealth of it: that is it in which he placeth his happiness, and which therefore he sets his heart upon. See here, (1.) How greedy he is of it, ver. 15. He hath swallowed down riches, as eagerly as ever a hungry man swallowed down meat, and is still crying, give, give. It is that which he desired, ver. 20. it was in his eye the best gift, and that which he coveted earnestly. (2.) What pains he takes for it, it is that which he laboured for, ver. 18. not by honest diligence in a lawful calling, but by an unwearied prosecution of all ways and methods, right or wrong, *per fas, per nefas*, to be rich. We must not labour to be rich, *Prov.* xxiii. 4. but to be charitable, that we may have to give, *Eph.* iv. 28. not to spend. (3.) What great things he promiseth himself from it, intimated in the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter, ver. 17. his being disappointed of them supposeth he had flattered himself with the hopes of them: he expected rivers of sensual delights.

(3.) Violence, and oppression, and injustice to his poor neighbours, ver. 19. This was the sin of the giants of the old world, and a sin that, as much as any other, brings God's judgments upon nations and families. It is charged upon this wicked man, (1.) That he hath forsaken the poor, taken no care of them, shewed no kindness to them, nor made any provision for them. At first, perhaps for a pretence, he gave alms like the Pharisees, to gain a reputation; but when he had served his turn with it he left it off, and forsook the poor, whom before he seemed to be concerned for. Those who do good, but not from a good principle, tho' they may abound in it will not abide in it. (2.) That he has oppressed them, crushed them, taken all advantages against them to do them a mischief: to enrich himself he has robbed the spittal, and made the poor poorer. (3.) That he

hath violently taken away their houses, which he had no right to, as Ahab took Naboth's vineyard, not by secret fraud, by forgery, perjury, or some trick in law, but avowedly, and by open violence.

2. What his punishment is for this wickedness.

1. He shall be disappointed in his expectations, and shall not find that satisfaction in this worldly wealth which he vainly promised himself, ver. 17. *He shall never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter*, with which he hoped to glut himself. The world is not that to those who love it, and court it, and admire it, which they fancy it will be. The enjoyment sinks far below the raised expectation.

2. He shall be diseased and distempered in his body: and what little comfort can a man have in wealth if he have not health? Sickness and pain, especially if they be in extremity, imbitter all his enjoyments. This wicked man has all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable, but what the nearer, when his bones are full of the sins of his youth, ver. 11. i. e. of the effects of those sins. By his drunkenness and gluttony, his uncleanness and wantonness when he was young, he contracted those diseases, which are painful to him long after, and, perhaps, make his life very miserable, and as Solomon speaks consume his flesh and his body, *Prov.* v. 11. Perhaps, he was given to fight when he was young, and then made nothing of a cut or a bruise in a fray, but he feels it in his bones long after. But can he get no ease, no relief? No, he is like to carry his pains and diseases with him to the grave, or rather, they are likely to carry him thither, and so the sins of his youth shall lie down with him in the dust: the very putrefying of his body in the grave is to him the effect of sin, chap. xxiv. 19. So that his iniquity is upon his bones there, *Ezek.* xxxii. 27. The sin of sinners follows them to the other side death.

3. He shall be disquieted and troubled in his mind. Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, ver. 20. He has not that ease in his own mind that people think he has, but is in a continual toss. The ill-got wealth which he has swallowed down makes him sick at his stomach, and like undigested meat is always upbraiding him. Let none expect to enjoy that comfortably which they have got unjustly. The unquietness of his mind ariseth, (1.) From his conscience looking back, and filling him with the fear of the wrath of God against him, for his wickedness. Even that wickedness which was sweet in the commission, and was rolled under the tongue as a delicate morsel, becomes bitter in the reflection, and when it is reviewed fills him with horror and vexation. In his bowels it is turned, ver. 14. like John's book, in his mouth as sweet as honey, but when he had eaten it his belly was bitter, *Rev.* x. 10. Such a thing is sin, it is turned into the gall of asps, than which nothing is more bitter, the poison of asps, ver. 16. than which nothing more fatal, and so it will be to him: what he sucked so sweetly, and with so much pleasure, will prove to him the poison of asps; so will all unlawful gains be. The fawning tongue will prove the viper's tongue. All the charming graces that are thought to be in sin, when conscience is awakned, will turn into so many raging furies. (2.) From his cares, looking forwards, ver. 22. In the fulness of his sufficiency, when he thinks himself most happy, and most sure of the continuance of his happiness, he shall be in straits, i. e. he shall think himself so, through the anxieties and perplexities of his own mind, as that rich man who when his ground brought forth plentifully, cried out, *what shall I do?* *Luke* xii. 17.

4. He shall be dispossessed of his estate: that shall sink and dwindle away to nothing, so that he shall not rejoice therein, ver. 18. He shall not only never rejoice truly, but not long enjoy it at all.

(1.) What he has unjustly swallowed he shall be compelled to disgorge, ver. 15. He hath swallowed down riches, and then thought himself sure of them, and that they were as much his own as the meat he has eaten, but he is deceived, he shall vomit them up again: his own conscience, perhaps, may make him so uneasy in the keeping of what he has got, that for the quiet of his own mind he shall make restitution, and that not with the pleasure of a virtue, but the pain of a vomit, and with the utmost reluctance. Or, If he do not himself refund, what he has violently taken away, God shall by his providence force him to it, and bring it about one way or other, that ill gotten goods shall return to the right owners: God shall cast them out of his belly, while yet the love of the sin is not cast out of his heart. So loud shall the clamours of the poor be against him whom he has impoverished, that he shall be forced to send his children to them to speak them fair, and beg their pardon, ver. 10. *His children shall seek to please the poor*, whilst his own hands shall restore them their goods with shame, ver. 18. That which he laboured for by all the arts of oppression, shall he restore, and shall not so swallow it down, as to digest it, it shall not stay with him, but according to his shame shall the restitution be, having gotten a great deal unjustly, he shall restore a great deal; so that when every body has their own, he will have but a little left for himself. To be made to restore what was unjustly gotten, by the sanctifying grace of God, as Zaccheus was, is a great mercy, he voluntarily and chearfully restored four-fold, and yet had a great deal left to give to the poor, *Luke* xix. 8. But to be forced to restore



restore as Judas was, merely by the horrors of a despairing conscience, has none of that benefit and comfort attending it, for he *threw down the pieces of silver, and went and hanged himself.*

(2.) He shall be stripped of all he has, and become a beggar. He that spoiled others shall himself be spoiled; *Isa. xxxiii. 1. for every hand of the wicked shall be upon him.* The innocent whom he has wronged fit down by their loss, saying, as David, *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but my hand shall not be upon him, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13.* But tho' they have forgiven him, tho' they will make no reprisals, divine justice will, and oftentimes makes the wicked to avenge the quarrel of the righteous, and squeezes and crushes one ill man by the hand of another upon him. Thus when he is plucked of all sides, he shall not save of that which he desired, *ver. 20.* Not only not save it all, but save nothing of it. There shall none of his meat (which he coveted so much, and fed upon with so much pleasure) be left, *ver. 21.* All his neighbours and relations shall look upon him to be in such ill circumstances, that when he is dead no man shall look for his goods; none of his kindred shall expect to be a penny the better for him, nor be willing to take out letters of administration of what he leaves behind him. In all this Zophar reflects upon Job, who had lost all, and was reduced to the last extremity.

23. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him, while he is eating. 24. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. 25. It is drawn and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall; terrors are upon him. 26. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. 27. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity: and the earth shall rise up against him. 28. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. 29. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.

Zophar having described the many embarrassments and vexations which commonly attend the wicked practices of oppressors and cruel men, here comes to shew their utter ruin at last.

1. Their ruin will take its rise from God's wrath and vengeance, *ver. 23.* The hand of the wicked was upon him, *ver. 22.* Every hand of the wicked. His hand was against every one, and therefore every man's hand will be against him, and yet in grappling with these he might go near to make his part good: but his heart cannot endure, nor his hands be strong, when God shall deal with him, *Ezek. xxii. 14.* when God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and rain it upon him. Every word here speaks terror. It is not only the justice of God that is engaged against him; but his wrath, the deep resentment of provocations given to himself: it is the fury of his wrath, incensed to the highest degree: it is cast upon him with force and fierceness; it is rained upon him, in abundance, it comes on his head like the fire and brimstone upon Sodom, to which the psalmist also refers, *Psal. xi. 6.* On the wicked God shall rain fire and brimstone, and there is no fence against it but only in Christ, who is the only covert from the storm and tempest, *Isa. xxxii. 2.* This wrath shall be cast upon him when he is about to fill his belly, just going to glut himself upon what he has got, and promising himself abundant satisfaction in it. Then when he is eating shall this tempest surprize him, when he is secure and easy, and in apprehension of no danger; as the ruin of the old world and Sodom came, when they were in the depth of their security, and the height of their sensuality, as Christ observes, *Luke xvii. 26, &c.* Perhaps Zophar reflects on the death of Job's children when they were eating and drinking.

2. Their ruin will be inevitable, and there will be no possibility of escaping it, *ver. 24.* He shall flee from the iron weapon. Flight argues guilt: he will not humble himself under the judgments of God, nor seek means to make his peace with him, all his care is to out-run the vengeance that pursues him; but in vain: if he escape the sword, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through. God has weapons of all sorts, he has both *whet his sword and bent his bow, Psal. vii. 12, 13.* can deal with his enemies (*cominus* or *eminus*) at hand or afar off. He has a sword for those that think to fight it out with him by their strength, and a bow for those that think to avoid him by their craft. See *Isa. xxiv. 17, 18.* *Jer. xlviii. 43, 44.* He that is marked for ruin, tho' he may escape one judgment, will find another ready for him.

3. It will be a total, terrible ruin. When the dart that has struck him through (for when God shoots he is sure to hit his mark, when he strikes he strikes home) comes to be drawn out of his body, when the glittering sword (the lightning, so the word is) the flaming sword, the sword that is bathed in heaven, (*Isa. xxxiv. 5.*) when this comes out of his gall, O what terrors are upon him! How strong are the convulsions, how violent are the dying agonies! How terrible are the arrests of death to a wicked man!

4. Sometimes it is a ruin that comes upon him insensibly, *ver. 26.* (1.) The darkness he is wrapped up in is a hidden darkness: it is all darkness, utter darkness, without the least mixture of light, and it is hid in his secret place, whither he is retreated, and where he hopes to shelter himself, he never retires into his own conscience, but he finds himself in the dark and utterly at a loss. (2.) The fire he is consumed by is a fire not blown, kindled without noise, a consumption on which every body sees the effect of, but nobody sees the cause of: it is plain the ground is withered, but the worm at the root that withers it is out of sight. He is wasted by a soft gentle fire, surely, but very slowly. When the fuel is very combustible, the fire needs no blowing, and that is his case: he is ripe for ruin: *the proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be stubble, Mal. iv. 1.* An unquenchable fire shall consume him, so some read it; and that is certainly true of hell-fire.

5. It is a ruin not only to himself but to his family: *it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle,* for the curse shall reach him, and he shall be cut off perhaps by the same grievous disease: there is an entail of wrath upon the family, which will destroy both his heirs and his inheritance, *ver. 28.* (1.) His posterity will be rooted out. The increase of his house shall depart; shall either be cut off by untimely deaths, or forced to run their country. Numerous and growing families, if wicked and vile, are soon reduced, dispersed, and extirpated, by the judgments of God. (2.) His estate will be sunk. His goods shall flow away from his family as fast as ever they flowed into it, when the day of God's wrath comes, for which all the while his estate was in the getting by fraud and oppression, he was treasuring up wrath.

6. It is a ruin which will manifestly appear to be just and righteous, and what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness, for, *ver. 27.* The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, i. e. the God of heaven, who sees all the secret wickedness of the wicked, will by some means or other let all the world know what an ill man he has been, that they may own the justice of God in all that is brought upon him. The earth also shall rise up against him, both to discover his wickedness, and to avenge it. *The earth shall disclose her blood, Isa. xxvi. 21.* The earth riseth up against him, (as the stomach riseth against that which is loathsome to spit it out) and will no longer keep him: *the heaven reveals his iniquity,* and therefore will not receive him, whither then must he go but to hell? If the God of heaven and earth be his enemy, neither heaven nor earth will shew him any kindness, but all the hosts of both are, and will be at war with him.

Lastly, Zophar concludes like an orator, *ver. 29.* This is the portion of a wicked man from God, it is allotted him, it is designed him, as his portion. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity, it is what he must abide by: *this is the heritage of his decree from God;* it is the settled rule of his judgment, and fair warning is given of it. *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die!* *Ezek. xxxiii. 8.* Tho' impenitent sinners do not always fall under such temporal judgments as are here described, (therein Zophar was mistaken) yet the wrath of God abides upon them, and they are made miserable by spiritual judgments, which are much worse, their consciences being either on the one hand a terror to them, and then they are in continual amazement, or on the other hand feared and silenced, and then they are given up to a reprobate sense, and bound over to eternal ruin. Never was any doctrine better explained, nor worse applied, than this here by Zophar, who intended by all this to prove Job an hypocrite. Let us receive the good explication, and make a better application, for warning to ourselves to stand in awe, and not to sin.

## C H A P. XXI.

This is Job's reply to Zophar's discourse; in which he complains less of his own miseries, than he had done in his former discourse, finding that his friends were not moved by his complaints, to pity him in the least, and comes closer to the general question that was in dispute betwixt him and them, whether outward prosperity, and the continuance of it, was a mark of the true church, and the true members of it, so that the ruin of a man's prosperity is sufficient to prove him an hypocrite, tho' no other evidence appear against him: this they asserted, but Job denied. (1.) His preface here is designed for the moving of their affections, that he might gain their attention, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) His discourse is designed for the convincing of their judgments, and the rectifying of their mistakes. He owns that God does sometimes hang up a wicked man as it were in chains, in terrorem, by some visible remarkable judgment in this life, but denies that he always doth so; nay, he maintains that commonly he doth otherwise, suffering even the worst of sinners, to live all their days in prosperity, and to go out of the world without any visible mark of his wrath upon them. (1.) He describes the great prosperity of wicked people, *ver. 7—13.* (2.) He shews their great impiety, in which they are hardened by their prosperity, *ver. 14—16.* (3.) He foretells their ruin at length, but after a long reprieve, *ver. 17—21.* (4.) He observes a very great variety in the ways of God's providence towards men, even towards bad men, *ver. 22—26.* (5.) He



(5.) He overthrows the ground of their severe censures of him, by shewing that the destruction is reserved for the other world, but that they many times escape to the last in this world, ver. 27, ad fin. And in this Job was clearly in the right.

**B**UT Job answered and said, 2. Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations. 3. Suffer me that I may speak, and after that I have spoken, mock on. 4. As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? 5. Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth. 6. Even when I remember, I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.

Job here recommends himself, both his case and his discourse, both what he suffered, and what he said, to the compassionate consideration of his friends.

1. That which he begs of them is very fair, that they would suffer him to speak, ver. 3: and not break in upon him, as Zophar had done, in the midst of his discourse. Losers of all men may have leave to speak; and if those that are accused and censured may not speak for themselves, they are wronged without remedy, and have no way to come at their right. That they would hear diligently his speech, ver. 2. as those that were willing to understand him, and if they were under a mistake to have it rectified; and that they would mark him, ver. 5. for as good not hear, as not heed and observe what we hear.

2. That which he urgeth for this is very reasonable. 1. They came to comfort him, now faith he, let this be your consolations, ver. 2. If you have no other comforts to administer to me, yet deny me not this, be so kind, so just, as to give me a patient hearing, and that shall pass for your consolations of me. Nay, they could not know how to comfort him, if they would not give him leave to open his case, and tell his own story. Or, it will be a consolation to yourselves in the reflection, to have dealt tenderly with your afflicted friend, and not harshly.

2. He would hear them speak when it came to their turn. After I have spoken, you may go on with what you have to say, and I will not hinder you, no, tho' you go on to mock me. Those that engage in controversy must count upon having hard words given them, and resolve to bear it patiently, for generally they that mock, will mock on, whatever is said to them.

3. He hoped to convince them: if you will but give me a fair hearing mock on if you can, but I believe I shall say that which will change your note, and make you pity me rather than mock me.

4. They were not his judges, ver. 4. *Is my complaint to man?* No, if it were, I see it would be to little purpose to complain. But my complaint is to God, and to him do I appeal. Let him be judge between you and me! Before him we stand upon even terms, and therefore I have the privilege of being heard as well as you. If my complaint were to man, my spirit would be troubled, for they would not regard me, nor rightly understand me; but my complaint is to God, who will suffer me to speak, tho' you will not. It would be sad if God should deal as unkindly with us as our friends sometimes do.

5. There was that in his case which was very surprising and astonishing, and therefore both needed and deserved their most serious consideration. It was not a common case, but very extraordinary.

1. He himself was amazed at it, at the troubles God had laid upon him, and the censures of his friends concerning him, ver. 6. *When I remember that terrible day, in which I was on a sudden stripped of all my comforts, that day in which I was stricken with sore boils, when I remember all the hard speeches with which you have grieved me, I confess I am afraid, and trembling takes hold of my flesh,* especially when I compare this with the prosperous condition of many wicked people, and the applauses of their neighbours, with which they pass thro' the world. Note, The providences of God, in the government of the world, are sometimes very astonishing, even to wise and good men, and bring them to their wits end.

2. He would have them wonder at it, ver. 5. *Mark me, and be astonished.* Instead of expounding my troubles, you should awfully adore the unfathomable mysteries of providence in afflicting one thus, whom you know no ill by; you should therefore lay your hand upon your mouth, silently wait the issue, and judge nothing before the time. *God's way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters.* When we cannot account for what he doth, in suffering the wicked to prosper, and the godly to be afflicted, nor fathom the depth of those proceedings, it becomes us to sit down and admire them. *Upright men shall be astonished at this,* chap. xvii. 8. Be you so.

7. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? 8. Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. 9. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. 10. Their bull gendereth and faileth not, their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.

No. xxxvi.

11. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. 12. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. 13. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. 14. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. 15. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him? 16. Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

All Job's three friends in their last discourses had been very large in describing the miserable condition of a wicked man in this world: It is true, (saith Job) remarkable judgments are sometimes brought upon notorious sinners, but not always; for we have many instances of the great and long prosperity of those that are openly and avowedly wicked: Tho' they are hardened in their wickedness by their prosperity, yet they are still suffered to prosper.

1. He here describes their prosperity, both to the height, and breadth, and length of it. If this be true, as you say, pray tell me *wherefore do the wicked live,* ver. 7. The matter of fact is taken for granted, for we see instances of it every day. (1.) They live, and are not suddenly cut off by the strokes of divine vengeance: They yet speak who have set their mouths against the heavens. They yet act who have stretched out their hands against God. Not only they live, i. e. they are reprieved, but they live in prosperity, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. Nay, (2.) They become old, they have the honour, satisfaction and advantage of living long, time enough to raise their families and estates. We read of a *sinner a hundred years old*, Isa. lxv. 20. But this is not all. (3.) They are mighty in power, are preferred to places of authority and trust, and not only make a great figure, but bear a great sway. *Vivit imò & in senatum venit.* Now wherefore is it so? Note, It is worth while to enquire into the reasons of the outward prosperity of wicked people. It is not because God has forsaken the earth, because he doth not see, or doth not hate, or cannot punish their wickedness; but it is because the measure of their iniquities is not full: This is the day of God's patience, and some use or other he makes of them and their prosperity, to serve his own counsels, while it ripens them for ruin; but the chief reason is, because he will make it to appear there is another world, which is the world of retribution, and not this.

The prosperity of the wicked is here described to be,

1. Compleat and consummate. (1.) They are multiplied, and their family is built up, and they have the satisfaction of seeing it, ver. 8. *Their seed is established in their sight.* This is put first, as that which gives both a pleasant enjoyment and a pleasing prospect. (2.) They are easy and quiet, ver. 9. Whereas Zophar had spoken of their continual frights and terrors, Job saith *their houses are safe*, both from danger, and from the fear of it, ver. 9. and so far are they from the killing wounds of God's sword or arrows, that they do not feel the smart of so much as *the rod of God upon them.* (3.) They are rich, and thrive in their estates; of this he gives only one instance, ver. 10. Their cattle increase, and they meet with no disappointment in them; not so much as a cow casts her calf, and then their much must needs grow more. This is promised, *Exod. xxiii. 26. Deut. vii. 14.* (4.) They are merry, and live a jovial life, ver. 11, 12. *They send forth their little ones abroad among their neighbours, like a flock, in great numbers, to sport themselves.* They have their balls and musick-meetings, at which their children dance; and dancing is fittest for children, who know not how better to spend their time, and whose innocence guards them against the mischiefs that commonly attend it. And tho' the parents are not so very youthful and frolicsome as to dance themselves, yet they take the timbrel and harp; they pipe, and their children dance after their pipe, and they know no grief to put their instruments out of tune, or to withhold their hearts from any joy. Some observe that this is an instance of their vanity, as well as of their prosperity: Here is none of that care taken of their children which Abraham took of his, to *teach them the way of the Lord*, Gen. xviii. 19. Their children do not pray, or say their catechism, but dance, and sing, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. Sensual pleasures are all the delights of carnal people, and as men are themselves, so they breed their children.

2. Continuing and constant, ver. 13. *They spend their days*, all their days in wealth, and never know what it is to want; in mirth, and never know what sadness means, and at last, without any previous alarms to frighten them, without any anguish, or agony, *in a moment they go down to the grave*, and there are no bands in their death: And if there were not another life after this, it were most desirable to die by the quickest, shortest strokes of death. Since we must *down to the grave*, if that were the furthest of our journey, we would wish to go down in a moment, to swallow the bitter pill, and not chew it.

2. He shews how they abuse their prosperity, and are confirmed and hardened by it in their impiety, ver. 14, 15. Their gold and silver serves to steel and brazen them, to make them more insolent, and more impudent in their wickedness. Now he mentions this either (1.) To increase the difficulty: It is strange that any wicked people should prosper thus, but especially that those



should prosper who are arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as openly to bid defiance to God himself, and tell him to his face they care not for him; nay, and that their prosperity should be continued, tho' they bear up themselves upon that, in their opposition to God; with that weapon they fight against him, and yet are not disarmed. Or, (2.) To lessen the difficulty: God suffers them to prosper, but let us not wonder at it; for *the prosperity of fools destroys them*, by hardning them in sin, *Prov. i. 32. Psal. lxxiii. 7—9.*

See how light these prospering sinners make of God and religion, as if because they have so much of this world, they had no need to look after another.

(1.) See how ill affected they are to God and religion; they abandon them, and cast off the thoughts of them. (1.) They dread the presence of God, they *say unto him depart from us*, let us never be troubled with the apprehension of our being under God's eye, nor be restrained by the fear of him. Or, they bid him depart, as one they do not need, nor have any occasion to make use of: The world is the portion they have chosen and take up with, and think themselves happy in, and while they have that, they can live without God. Justly will God say to them depart, *Mat. xxv. 41.* who have bid him depart; and justly doth he now take them at their word. (2.) They dread the knowledge of God, and of his will, and of their duty to him. *We desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* They that are resolved not to walk in God's ways, desire not to know them, because their knowledge will be a continual reproach to their disobedience, *John iii. 19.*

(2.) See how they argue against God and religion, *ver. 15. What is the Almighty?* Strange, that ever creatures should speak so insolently, that ever reasonable creatures should speak so absurdly, and unreasonably. The two great bonds by which we are drawn, and held to religion, are those of duty and interest; now they here endeavour to break both these bonds asunder. (1.) They will not believe it is their duty to be religious. *What is the Almighty that we should serve him?* like Pharaoh, *Exod. v. 2. Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?* Observe how slightly they speak of God; what is the Almighty? as if he were a meer name, a meer cypher, or one they have nothing to do with, and that has nothing to do with them. How hardly they speak of religion! They call it a service, and mean a hard service. Is it not enough, they think to keep up a fair correspondence with the Almighty, but they must serve him, which they look upon as a task and a drudgery. Observe also how highly they speak of themselves, that we should serve him: We who are rich and mighty in power, shall we be subject and accountable to him! No, we are Lords, *Jer. ii. 31.* (2.) They will not believe it is their interest to be religious. *What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* All the world is for what they can get, and therefore wisdom's merchandize is neglected, because they think there is nothing to be got by it: *It is in vain to serve God*, *Mal. iii. 13, 14.* Praying will not pay debts, nor portion children; nay, perhaps serious godliness may balk a man's preferment, and expose him to losses; and what then? Is nothing to be called gain but the wealth and honour of this world? If we obtain the favour of God, and spiritual and eternal blessings, we have no reason to complain of losing by our religion. But if we have not profit by prayer, it is our own fault, *Isa. lviii. 3, 4.* it is because we ask amiss, *Jam. iv. 2.* Religion it self is not a vain thing; if it be so to us, we may thank our selves for resting in the outside of it, *Jam. i. 26.*

3. He shews their folly herein, and utterly disclaims all concurrence with them, *ver. 19. Lo, their good is not in their hand, i. e.* They did not get it without God, and therefore they are very ungrateful to slight him thus: *It was not their might, nor the power of their hand*, that got them this wealth, and therefore they ought to remember God who gave it them. Nor can they keep it without God, and therefore they are very unwise to lose their interest in him, and bid him to depart from them. Some give this sense of it: Their good is in their barns and their bags, hoarded up there; it is not in their hand, to do good to others with it, and then what good doth it do them? And therefore (saith Job) *the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* Far be it from me, that I should be of their mind, say as they say, do as they do, and take my measures from them. Their posterity approve their sayings, tho' their way be their folly, *Psal. xlix. 13.* but I know better things than to walk in their counsel.

17. How often is the candle of the wicked put out? and how oft cometh their destruction upon them? God distributeth sorrows in his anger. 18. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. 19. God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it. 20. His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst? 22. Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high. 23. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. 24. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are

moistened with marrow. 25. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. 26. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

Job had largely described the prosperity of wicked people, now in these verses,

1. He opposeth this to what his friends had maintained concerning their certain ruin in this life. Tell me how oft do you see the candle of the wicked put out. Do you not as often see it burn down to the socket, until it goes out of itself? *ver. 17.* How oft do you see their destruction come upon them, or God distributing sorrows in anger among them? Do you not as often see their mirth and prosperity continuing to the last? Perhaps there are as many instances of notorious sinners ending their days in pomp, as ending them in misery: which observation is sufficient to invalidate their arguments against Job, and to shew that no certain judgment can be made of mens character by their outward condition.

2. He reconciles this to the holiness and justice of God: tho' wicked people prosper thus all their days, yet we are not therefore to think that God will let their wickedness always go unpunished. No,

(1.) Even while they prosper thus they are *as stubble and chaff before the stormy wind*, *ver. 18.* They are light and worthless, and of no account either with God or with wise and good men. They are fitted to destruction, and continually lie exposed to it, and in the height of their pomp and power there is but a step between them and ruin.

(2.) Tho' they spend all their days in wealth, God is laying up their iniquity for their children, *ver. 19.* and he will visit it upon their posterity when they are gone. The oppressor lays up his goods for his children, to make them gentlemen, but God lays up his iniquity for them, to make them beggars: he keeps an exact account of the father's sins. *Seals them up among his treasures*, *Deut. xxxii. 34.* and will justly punish the children, while the riches, to which the curse cleaves, are found as affets in their hands.

(3.) Tho' they prosper in this world, yet they shall be reckoned with in another world: God rewardeth him according to his deeds at last, *ver. 19.* tho' the sentence passed against his evil works be not executed speedily. Perhaps he may not now be made to fear the wrath to come, but he may flatter himself with hopes that he shall have peace tho' he go on: but he shall be made to feel it, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. He shall know it, *ver. 19. His eyes shall see his destruction*, which he would not be persuaded to believe. *They will not see, but they shall see*, *Isa. xxvi. 11.* The eyes that have been wilfully shut against the grace of God, shall be opened to see his destruction. And he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty, that shall be the portion of his cup. Compare *Psal. xi. 6.* with *Rev. xiv. 10.* The misery of damned sinners is here set forth in a few words, but very terrible ones: they lie under the wrath of an Almighty God, who in their destruction both shews his wrath, and makes his power known.

And if this will be his condition in the other world, what good will his prosperity in this world do him? *ver. 21. What pleasure has he in his house after him?* Our Saviour has let us know how little pleasure the rich man in hell had in his house after him, when the remembrance of the good things he had received in his life-time would not cool his tongue, but added much to his misery, as did also the sorrow he was in left, his five brethren, whom he left in his house after him, should follow him to that place of torment, *Luke xvi. 25—28.* So little will the gain of the world profit him that has lost his soul.

3. He resolves this difference which providence makes between one wicked man and another into the wisdom and sovereignty of God. *ver. 22. Shall any pretend to teach God knowledge?* Dare we arraign God's proceedings, or blame his conduct? Shall we take upon us to tell God how he should govern the world, what sinner he should spare, and what he should punish? He hath both authority and ability to judge those that are high. Angels in heaven, princes and magistrates on earth, are accountable to God, and must receive their doom from him; he manages them, and makes what use he pleases of them: shall he then be accountable to us, or receive advice from us? he is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he shall do right, *Gen. xviii. 25. Rom. iii. 6.* and those proceedings of his providence which seem to contradict one another, he can make not only mutually to agree, but jointly to serve his own purpose.

The little difference there is between one wicked man's dying impenitent in peace and pomp, and another wicked man's dying in pain and misery, when both will at last meet in hell, he illustrates by the little difference there is between one man's dying suddenly and another's dying slowly, when they will both meet shortly in the grave. So vast is the disproportion between time and eternity, that if hell be the lot of every sinner at last, it breaks no squares if one goes singing thither, and another sighing. See,

(1.) How various the circumstances of people's dying are. There is one way into the world, we say, but many out; yet as



some are born by quick and easy labour, others by that which is hard and lingering, so dying is to some much more terrible than to others: and since the death of the body is the birth of the soul into another world, death-bed agonies may not unfitly be compared to childbed throws. Observe the difference,

1. One dies suddenly, in his full strength, not weakened by age or sickness, (*ver. 23.*) being wholly at ease and quiet, under no apprehension at all of the approach of death, nor in any fear of it: but, on the contrary, because his breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow, (*ver. 24.*) i. e. he is healthful and vigorous, and of a good constitution; like a milch-cow that is fat and in good liking, he counts upon nothing but to live many years in mirth and pleasure. Thus fair doth he bid for life, and yet cut off in a moment by the stroke of death. Note, It is a common thing for persons to be taken away by death when they are in their full strength, in the highest degree of health, when they least expect death, and think themselves best armed against it, and are ready not only to set death at a distance, but to set it at defiance. Let us therefore never be secure, for we have known many well and dead in the same week, the same day, the same hour, nay, perhaps, the same minute. Be we therefore always ready.

2. Another dies slowly, and with a great deal of previous pain and misery, *ver. 25.* In the bitterness of his soul, such as poor Job was himself now in, and never eats with pleasure, has no appetite to his food, nor any relish of it, through sickness, or age, or sorrow of mind. What great reason have those to be thankful that are in health, and always eat with pleasure? and what little reason have they to complain who sometimes do not, when they hear of many that never do?

(2.) How undiscernable this difference is in the grave: as rich and poor, so healthful and unhealthful meet there, *ver. 26.* They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them, and feed sweetly on them. Thus, if one wicked man die in a palace, and another in a dungeon, they will meet in the congregation of the dead and damned, and the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched, will be the same to them, which makes those differences inconsiderable, and not worth perplexing ourselves about.

27. Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me. 28. For ye say, Where is the house of the prince? and where are the dwelling places of the wicked? 29. Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens? 30. That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. 31. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done? 32. Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb. 33. The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. 34. How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood.

In these verses,

1. Job opposeth the opinion of his friends, which he saw they still adhered to. That wicked people are sure to fall into such visible and remarkable ruin, as Job was now fallen into, and none but they; upon which principle they condemned Job as a wicked man. I know your thoughts, (*saith Job, ver. 27.*) I know you will not agree with me; for your judgments are tainted and biased by your piques and prejudices against me, and the devices which you wrongfully imagine against my comfort and honour: and how can such men be convinced?

Job's friends were ready to say, in answer to his discourse concerning the prosperity of the wicked, *where is the house of the prince?* *ver. 28.* Job's house, or the house of his eldest son, in which his children were feasting: enquire what are the circumstances of Job's house and family, and then enquire, *where are the dwelling places of the wicked?* and compare them together, and you will soon see that Job's house is in the same predicament with the houses of tyrants and oppressors, and may therefore conclude that doubtless he was such a one.

2. He lays down his own judgment to the contrary, and for proof of it appeals to the sentiments and observations of all mankind. So confident is he that he is in the right, that he is willing to refer the cause to the next man that comes by, *ver. 29.* Have ye not asked them that go by the way, any indifferent person, any that will answer you, and not only to which of the saints, (to whom Eliphaz appealed, *chap. v. 1.*) but to which of the children of men will you turn? Turn to which you will, and you will find them all of my mind; that the punishment of sinners is designed more for the other world, than for this, according to the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, *Jude 14.* Do you not know the tokens of this truth, which all that have made any observations upon the providences of God concerning mankind in this world, can furnish you with?

Now what is it that Job here asserts? Two things,

1. That impenitent sinners will certainly be punished in the other world, and ordinarily their punishment is put off until then. 2. That therefore we are not to think it strange if they prosper greatly in this world, and fall under no visible token of God's wrath. Therefore they are spared now, because they are to be punished then; therefore the *workers of iniquity flourish, that they may be destroyed for ever*, *Psal. xcii. 7.* This sinner is here supposed,

1. To live in a great deal of power, so as to be not only the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, (*Ezek. xxxii. 27.*) but the terror of the wise and good too, whom he keeps in such awe that none dares declare his way to his face, *ver. 31.* None will take the liberty to reprove him, to tell him of the wickedness of his way, and what will be in the end thereof, so that he sins securely, and is not made to know either shame or fear. The prosperity of fools destroy them, by setting them (in their own conceit) above reproofs, by which they might be brought to that repentance which alone will prevent their ruin. Those are marked for destruction that are let alone in sin, *Hos. iv. 17.* And if none dares declare his way to his face, much less dare any repay him what he has done, and make him refund there where he has done wrong. He is one of those great flies which break through the cobwebs of the law, that hold only the little ones: this emboldens sinners in their sinful ways, that they can brow-beat justice, and make it afraid to meddle with them. But there is a day coming when those shall be told of their faults that now would not bear to hear of them, shall have their sins set in order before them, and their way declared to their face, to their everlasting confusion, that would not have it done here to their conviction; when those who would not repay the wrongs they had done, shall have them repaid to them.

2. To die and be buried in a great deal of pomp and magnificence, *ver. 32, 33.* There is no remedy; he must die; that is the lot of all men, but every thing you can think of shall be done to take off the reproach of death. (1.) He shall have a splendid funeral: a poor thing for any man to be proud of the prospect of; yet with some it passeth for a mighty thing: well, he shall be brought unto the grave in state, surrounded with all the honours of the Heralds office, and all the respects his friends can then pay to his remains: *the rich man died and was buried*, but no mention is made of the poor man's burial *Luke xvi. 22.* (2.) He shall have a stately monument erected over him, he shall remain in the tomb with a *hic jacet* over him, and a large encomium. Perhaps it is meant of the embalming of his body to preserve it, which was a piece of honour antiently done by the Egyptians to their great men. He shall watch in the tomb, so the word is, shall abide solitary and quiet there, as a watchman in his tower. (3.) *The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him*, there shall be as much done as can be with rich odours to take off the noisomeness of the grave, as by lamps to set aside the darkness of it, which perhaps was referred to in the foregoing phrase of watching in the tomb: but it is all a jest; what is the light, or what the perfume to a man that is dead? (4.) It shall be alledged for the lessening of the disgrace of death, that it is the common lot, he has only truckled to fate, *and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him.* Note, Death is the way of all the earth: when we are to cross that darksome valley we must consider, (1.) That there are innumerable before us, it is a tracked road, which may help to take off the terror of it. To die is *ire ad plures*, to go with the crowd. (2.) That every man shall draw after us: as there is a plain track before, so there is a long train behind; we are neither the first nor the last that pass through that dark entry. Every one must go in his own order, the order appointed of God.

Lastly, From all this Job infers the impertinency of their discourses, *ver. 34.* (1.) Their foundation is rotten, and they went upon a wrong hypothesis. In your answers there remaineth falsehood; what you have said, stands not only unproved but disproved, and lies under such an imputation of falsehood as you cannot clear it from. (2.) Their building was therefore weak and tottering, you comfort me in vain. All you have said gives me no relief; you tell me I shall prosper again if I turn to God, but you go upon this presumption that piety shall certainly be crowned with prosperity, which is false; and therefore how can your inference from it yield me any comfort? Note, Where there is not truth there is little comfort to be expected.

## CHAP. XXII.

Eliphaz here leads on a third attack upon poor Job, in which Bildad followed him, but Zophar drew back and quitted the field. It was one of the unhappineses of Job, as it is of many an honest man, to be misunderstood by his friends. He had spoken of the prosperity of wicked men in this world as a mystery of providence, but they took it for a reflection upon providence, as countenancing their wickedness, and fell foul upon him accordingly. In this chapter, (1.) Eliphaz checks him for his complaints of God, and of his dealings with him, as if he thought God had done him wrong, *ver. 2—4.* (2.) He chargeth him with many high crimes and misdemeanors



*misdemeanors, for which he supposeth God was now punishing him. Oppression and injustice, ver. 5—11. Atheism and infidelity, ver. 12—14. (3.) He compares his case to that of the old world, ver. 15—20. (4.) He gives him very good counsel, assuring him that if he would take it, God would return in mercy to him, and he should return to his former prosperity, ver. 21—30.*

1. **T**HEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? 3. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? 4. Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgment?

Eliphaz here insinuates that because Job complained so much of his afflictions he thought God was unjust in afflicting him; but it was a strained *innuendo*, Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz saith here, is therefore unjustly applied to Job, but in itself it is very true and good.

1. That when God doth us good, it is not because he is indebted to us; if he were, there might be some colour to say, when he afflicts us, he doth not deal fairly with us: but whoever pretends that he has by any meritorious action made God his debtor, let him prove this debt, and he shall be sure not to lose it, *Rom. xi. 35. Who has given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?* But Eliphaz here shews that the righteousness and perfection of the best man in the world is no real benefit or advantage to God, and therefore cannot be thought to merit any thing from him.

(1.) Man's piety is no profit to God, no gain, *ver. 1, 2.* If we could by any thing merit from God, it would be by our piety, our being righteous, and making our way perfect. If that will not merit, to be sure nothing else will: if a man cannot make God his debtor by his godliness and honesty, and obedience to his laws, much less can he by his wit and learning, and worldly policy. Now Eliphaz here asks, (1.) Whether any man can possibly be profitable to God? No, by no means: *he that is wise may be profitable to himself.* Note, Our wisdom and piety is that which we ourselves are, and are likely to be, great gainers by. *Wisdom is profitable to direct, Eccl. x. 10. Godliness is profitable to all things, 1 Tim iv. 8. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self, Prov. ix. 12.* The gains of religion are infinitely greater than the losses of it, and so it will appear when they are balanced. But can a man be thus profitable to God? No, for such is the perfection of God, that he cannot receive any benefit or advantage by men; what can be added to that which is infinite? And such is the weakness and imperfection of man, that he cannot offer any benefit or advantage to God. Can the light of a candle be profitable to the sun, or the drop of the bucket to the ocean! He that is wise is profitable to himself for his own direction and defence, his own credit and comfort; he can with his wisdom entertain himself and enrich himself; but can he so be profitable to God? No; God needs not us or our services. We are undone, for ever undone without him, but he is happy, for ever happy without us. Is it any gain to him, any real addition to his glory or wealth, if we make our way perfect? Suppose it were absolutely perfect, yet what is God the better? Much less when it is so far short of being perfect.

(2.) It is no pleasure to him; God hath indeed expressed himself in his word well pleased with the righteous; his countenance beholds them, and his delight is in them, and their prayers: but all that adds nothing to the infinite satisfaction and complacency which the eternal mind hath in itself. God can enjoy himself without us, tho' we could have but little enjoyment of ourselves without our friends. This magnifies his condescension in that, tho' our services be no real profit, or pleasure to him, yet he invites, encourages, and accepts of them.

2. That when God restrains or rebukes us, it is not because he is in danger by us, or jealous of us, *ver. 4. Will he reprove thee for fear of thee,* and take thee down from thy prosperity, lest thou shouldst grow too great for him; as princes sometimes have thought it a piece of policy to curb the growing greatness of a subject, lest he should become formidable? Satan indeed suggested to our first parents, that God forbade them the tree of knowledge, for fear of them, lest they should be as gods, and so become rivals with him; but it was a base insinuation. God rebukes the good because he loves them, but he never rebukes the great because he fears them. He doth not enter into judgment with men, *i. e.* pick a quarrel with them, and seek occasion against them for fear they should eclipse his honour, or endanger his interest. Magistrates punish offenders for fear of them; Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he feared them: it was for fear that Herod slew the children of Bethlehem; that the Jews persecuted Christ and his apostles. But God doth not, as they did, pervert justice for fear of any. See *Job xxxv. 5, 6, 7, 8.*

5. Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite? 6. For thou hast taken a pledge from thy bro-

ther for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. 7. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. 8. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth, and the honourable man dwelt in it. 9. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. 10. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; 11. Or darkness that thou canst not see, and abundance of waters cover thee. 12. Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are. 13. And thou sayest, how doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? 14. Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

Eliphaz and his companions had condemned Job in general as a wicked man and an hypocrite; but none of them had descended to particulars, nor drawn up any articles of impeachment against him, until Eliphaz did it here, where he positively and expressly chargeth him with many high crimes and misdemeanors, which if he had really been guilty of, they might well have justified themselves in their harsh censures of him. Come (saith Eliphaz) we have been too long beating about the bush, too tender of Job, and afraid of grieving him, which has but confirmed him in his self-justification; it is high time to deal plainly with him, we have condemned him by parables, but that doth not answer the end, he is not prevailed with to condemn himself; we must therefore plainly tell him, *thou art the man*, the tyrant, the oppressor, the atheist, we have been speaking of all this while. *Is not thy wickedness great?* Certainly it is, or else thy troubles would not be so great: I appeal to thy self, and thy own conscience; are not thine iniquities infinite, both in number and heinousness. Strictly taken, nothing is infinite but God: but he means this; his sins were more than could be counted, and more heinous than could be conceived. Sin being committed against an infinite majesty, has in it a kind of infinite malignity. But when Eliphaz, chargeth Job thus high, and ventures to descend to particulars too, laying to his charge that which he knew not, we may take occasion from hence, (1.) To be angry at those who do unjustly censure and condemn their brethren. For ought I know Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely as he doth here, was guilty of as great a sin, and as great a wrong to Job as the Sabeans and Chaldeans that robbed him. For a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity, and friendship, either to raise or receive calumnies, jealousies, and evil surmises, concerning others: and it is the more base and disingenuous if we thus vex those that are in distress, and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of the particulars that follow here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly, and throw all the dirt he could on Job, not doubting but some would stick. (2.) To pity those that are thus censured and condemned. Innocency it self will be no security against a false and foul tongue. Job, whom God himself praised as the best man in the world, is here represented by one of his friends, and he a wise and good man too, as one of the greatest villains in nature. Let us not think it strange if at any time we be thus blackened, but learn how to pass by evil report as well as good, and commit our cause, as Job did, to him that judgeth righteously.

Let us see the particular articles of this charge.

1. He charges him with oppression and injustice; that when he was in prosperity he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with it. This was utterly false, as appears by the account Job gives of himself, *chap. xxix. 12, &c.* and the character God gave of him, *chap. i.* And yet,

(1.) Eliphaz branches out this charge into divers particulars, with as much assurance as if he could call witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. He tells him, (1.) That he had been cruel and unmerciful to the poor. As a magistrate he ought to have protected them, and seen them provided for; but Eliphaz suspects that he never did them any kindness, but all the mischief his power enabled him to do. That for an inconsiderable debt he demanded and carried away by violence a pawn of great value, even from his brother, whose honesty and sufficiency he could not but know; *ver. 6. Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought; or as the LXX read it, thou hast taken thy brethren for pledges,* and that for nought; imprisoned them, enslaved them, because they had nothing to pay. That he had taken the very clothes of his insolvent tenants and debtors, all they had to their backs; so that he had stripped them naked, and left them so: the law of Moses forbade this, *Exod. xxii. 26. Deut. xxiv. 13.* That he had not been charitable to the poor; no not to poor travellers, and poor widows. Thou hast not given so much as a cup of cold water, which would have cost thee nothing, to the weary to drink, when he begged for it, (*ver. 7.*) and was ready to perish for want of it: nay, thou hast withholden bread from the hungry in their extremity, hast not only not given it, but hast forbidden the giving of it; which is *with-holding good from*



those to whom it is really due. Prov. iii. 27. Poor widows, that while their husbands were living, troubled nobody, but now were forced to seek relief, thou hast sent away empty from thy doors with a sad heart, *ver. 9.* Those that came to thee for justice, thou didst send them away unheard, unhelped, nay, tho' they come to thee full, thou didst squeeze them, and send them away empty: and, worst of all, the arms of the fatherless are broken: those that could help themselves but little, thou hast quite disabled to help themselves. This, which is the blackest part of the charge, is but insinuated; *the arms of the fatherless have been broken:* he doth not say, thou hast broken them, but he would have it understood so: and if they be broken, and those that have power do not relieve them, they are chargeable with it. They have been broken by those under thee, and thou hast connived at it, which brings thee under the guilt. (2.) That he had been partial to the rich and great, *ver. 8.* As for the mighty man, if he were guilty of any crime, yet he should never be questioned for it; he had the earth, he dwelt in it: if he brought an action never so unjustly, or if an action were never so justly brought against him, yet he was sure to carry his cause in thy courts. The poor were not fed at thy door while the rich were feasting at thy table. Contrary to this is Christ's rule for hospitality, *Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14.* and Solomon saith, *he that gives to the rich shall come to poverty.*

(2.) He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins, *ver. 10, 11.* Those that are guilty of such practices as these commonly bring themselves into just such a condition as thou art now in, and therefore we conclude thou hast been thus guilty.

(1.) God's providence useth to cross and embarrass such, and snares are accordingly round about thee; so that which way soever thou steppest or lookest, thou findest thy self in distress; and others are as hard upon thee as thou hast been upon the poor.

(2.) Their own consciences use to terrify and accuse them: no sin makes a louder cry there than unmercifulness: and accordingly sudden fear troubleth thee; and tho' thou wilt not own it, it is guilt of this kind that creates thee all this terror. Zophar had insinuated this, *chap. xx. 19, 20.* (3.) They are brought to their wits end, so mused and bewildered, that they know not what to do: and that also is thy case; for thou art in darkness that thou canst not see, wherefore God contends with thee, nor what is the best course for thee to take, *for abundance of waters cover thee, i. e. thou art in a mist, in the midst of dark waters, in the thick clouds of the sky.* Note, Those that have not shewed mercy, may justly be denied the comfortable hopes that they shall find mercy, and then what can they expect but snares, and darkness, and continual fear?

2. He chargeth him with atheism, infidelity, and gross impiety, and thought this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness: he that did not fear God, did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job was an Epicurean, who did indeed own the being of God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he confined himself to the entertainments of the upper world, and never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of this.

1. Eliphaz observes a good truth, which he thought if Job would duly consider, he would not be so passionate in his complaints, nor so bold in justifying himself, *ver. 12.* *Is not God in the height of heaven?* Yes, no doubt he is: no heaven so high but God is there: and in the highest heavens, the heavens of the blessed, the residence of his glory is in a special manner, there he is pleased to manifest himself in a way peculiar to the upper world, and thence he is pleased to manifest himself in a way suited to this lower world. There is his throne; there is his court: he is called the heavens, *Dan. iv. 26.* Thus Eliphaz proves that a man cannot be profitable to God, *ver. 2.* and that he ought not to contend with God; it is his folly if he does: and that we ought always to address ourselves to God with very great reverence; for when we behold the height of the stars, how high they are, we might at the same time also consider the transcendent majesty of God, who is above the stars, and how high he is.

2. He chargeth it upon Job that he made an ill use of this doctrine, which he might have made so good a use of, *ver. 13.* This is *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, fighting against religion with its own weapons, and turning its own artillery upon itself: thou art willing to own that *God is in the height of heaven*, but from thence thou inferrest, *how doth God know?* Bad men expel the fear of God out of their hearts, by banishing the eye of God out of the world, *Ezek. viii. 12.* and care not what they do, if they can but persuade themselves that God doth not know: Eliphaz suspects that Job had such notions as this of God, that because he is in the height of heaven, (1.) It is therefore impossible for him to see and hear what is done at so great a distance as this earth; especially since there is a dark cloud, *ver. 13.* many thick clouds, *ver. 14.* that come between him and us, and are a covering to him, so that he cannot see, much less can he judge of the affairs of this lower world: as if God had *eyes of flesh*, *Job x. 4.* The interposing firmament is to him as transparent crystal, *Ezek. i. 22.* Distance of place creates no difficulty to him who is immense, no more than distance of time to him who is eternal. Or, (2.) That it is therefore below him, No. xxxvi.

and a diminution to his glory to take cognizance of this inferior part of the creation: he walks in the circuit of heaven, and hath enough to do to enjoy himself and his own perfections and glory in that bright and quiet world; why should he trouble himself about us? This is gross absurdity, as well as gross impiety; which Eliphaz here fathers upon Job; for it supposeth that the administration of government is a burthen and disparagement to the supream governor; and the acts of justice and mercy were a toil to a mind infinitely wise, holy, and good. If the sun, a creature, and inanimate, can with his light and influence reach this earth, and every part of it, (*Psal. xix. 6.*) even from that vast height of the visible heavens in which he is, and in the circuit of which he walks, and that thro' many a thick and dark cloud, shall we question it concerning the Creator?

15. Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? 16. Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood. 17. Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them? 18. Yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. 19. The righteous see it, and are glad: and the innocent laugh them to scorn. 20. Whereas our substance is not cut down, but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

Eliphaz having endeavoured to convict Job, by setting his sins (as he thought) in order before him, here endeavours to awaken him to a sight and sense of his misery and danger, by reason of sin; and this he doth, by comparing his case with that of the sinners of the old world; *q. d.* thy condition is bad now, but unless thou repent it will be worse, as theirs was. Theirs *who were overflown with a flood*, as the old world, *ver. 16.* and theirs *the remnant of whom the fire consumed*, *ver. 20.* viz. the Sodomites, who in comparison of the old world were but a remnant. And these two instances of the wrath of God against sin and sinners, are more than once put together for warning to a careless world, as by our Saviour, *Luke xvii. 26, &c.* and the Apostle, *2 Pet. ii. 5, 6.* Eliphaz would have Job to mark the old way which wicked men have trodden, *ver. 15.* and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. Note, There is an old way which wicked men have trodden. Religion had but newly entered, when sin immediately followed it: But tho' it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way, and it leads to destruction: And it is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk in it. Eliphaz here puts Job in mind of it, perhaps in opposition to what he had said of the prosperity of the wicked; *q. d.* thou canst find out here and there a single instance, it may be, of a wicked man ending his days in peace, but what is that to those two great instances of the final perdition of ungodly men; the drowning of the whole world, and the burning of Sodom? Destructions by wholesale, in which he thinks Job may, as in a glass, see his own face.

Observe, 1. The Ruin of those sinners, *ver. 16.* *They were cut down out of time;* i. e. they were cut off in the midst of their days, when as man's time then went, many of them might in a course of nature, have lived some hundreds of years longer, which made their immature extirpation the more grievous. They were cut down out of time to be hurried into eternity. And their foundation, the earth on which they built themselves, and all their hopes, was overflown with a flood, the flood which was brought in upon the world of the ungodly, *2 Pet. ii. 5.* Note, Those who build upon the sand, chuse a foundation which will be overflown, when the rains descend, and the floods come, *Mat. vii. 27.* and then their building must needs fall, and they perish in the ruins of it, and repent their folly when it is too late.

2. The sin of those sinners, which brought that ruin, *ver. 17.* *They said unto God, depart from us.* Job had spoke of some who said so, and yet prospered, *chap. xxi. 14.* But these did not, (saith Eliphaz) they found to their cost what it was to set God at defiance. Those that were resolved to lay the reins in the neck of their appetites and passions, began with this; they said unto God, *Depart*, they abandoned all religion, hated the thoughts of it, and desired to live without God in the world; they shunned his word, and silenced conscience, his deputy! And what can the Almighty do for them? Some make this to speak the justness of their punishment: They said to God, *Depart from us*, and then *what else could the Almighty do with them, but cut them off?* Those that will not submit to God's golden scepter, what is to be expected, but that they should be broken to pieces with his iron rod? Others make it to speak the injustice of their sin: But *what hath the Almighty done against them?* What iniquity have they found in him? or wherein has he wearied them? *Mic. vi. 3.* *Jer. ii. 5.* Others make it to speak the reason of their sin; They say unto God, *Depart*, asking *what the Almighty can do to them:* What has he done to oblige us? What can he do in a way of wrath to make us miserable? or in a way of favour to make us happy? As they argue, *Zeph. i. 12.* *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* Eliphaz shews the absurdity of this in one word, and that is calling



calling God the Almighty; for if he be so, what cannot he do? But it is not strange if those cast off all religion, who neither dread God's wrath, nor desire his favour.

3. The aggravation of this sin: *Yet he had filled their houses with good things*, ver. 18. Both those of the old world, and those of Sodom, had great plenty of all the delights of sense; for *they eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, &c.* Luke xvii. 27. So that they had no reason to ask *what the Almighty could do for them*; for they lived upon his bounty: No reason to bid him depart from them, who had been so kind to them. Many have their houses full of goods, but their hearts empty of grace, and thereby are marked for ruin.

4. The protestation which Eliphaz makes against the principles and practices of those wicked people: *But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* Job had said so, chap. xxi. 16. and Eliphaz will not be behind with him: If they cannot agree in their own principles concerning God, yet they agree in renouncing the principles of those that live without God in the world. Note, Those that differ from each other in some matters of religion, and are engaged in disputes about them, yet ought unanimously and vigorously to appear against atheism and irreligion, and to take great care that their disputes do not hinder either their vigour, or unanimity, in that common cause of God, that righteous cause.

5. The pleasure and satisfaction which the righteous shall have in this. (1.) In seeing the *wicked destroyed*, ver. 19. They shall see it, *i. e.* observe it, and take notice of it, *Hof.* xiv. 9. and they shall be glad, not to see their fellow-creatures miserable, or any secular turn of their own served, or point gained, but to see God glorified, the word of God fulfilled, the power of oppressors broken, and thereby the oppressed relieved; to see sin ashamed, atheists and infidels confounded, and fair warning given to all others to shun such wicked courses. Nay, they shall *laugh them to scorn*, *i. e.* they justly might do it, they shall do it as God doth it, in a holy manner, *Psal.* ii. 4. *Prov.* i. 26. They shall take occasion from thence to expose the folly of sinners, and shew how ridiculous their principles are, tho' they call themselves wits. *Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength*; and see what comes of it, *Psal.* lii. 7. Some understand this of righteous Noah and his family, who beheld the destruction of the old world, and rejoiced in it, as he had grieved for their impiety: And Lot, who saw the ruin of Sodom, had the same reason to rejoice, *1 Pet.* ii. 8. (2.) In seeing *themselves distinguished*, ver. 20. *Whereas our substance is not cut down*, as theirs was, and as thine is, we continue to prosper, which is a sign we are the favourites of heaven, and in the right. The same rule that served him to condemn Job by, served him to magnify himself, and his companions by: His substance is cut down, therefore he is a wicked man: Ours is not, therefore we are righteous: But it is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. If others be consumed, if the very remnant of them be consumed, and we be not, instead of censuring them, and lifting up our selves, as Eliphaz doth here, we ought to be thankful to God, and take it for a warning to our selves to prepare for the like calamities.

21. Acquaint now thy self with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. 22. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. 23. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. 24. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. 25. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. 26. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up thy face unto God. 27. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. 28. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways. 29. When *men* are cast down, then thou shalt say, *There is lifting up*: and he shall save the humble person. 30. He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.

Methinks I can almost forgive Eliphaz his hard censures of Job, which we had in the beginning of the chapter, tho' they were very unjust and unkind, for this good counsel and encouragement which he gives him in these verses with which he closeth his discourse, and than which nothing could be better said, or more to the purpose. Tho' he thought him a bad man, yet he saw reason to have hopes concerning him; that for all this he would be both pious and prosperous: But it is strange, that out of the same mouth, and almost in the same breath, both sweet waters and bitter should proceed. Good men, tho' they may perhaps be put into a heat, yet sometimes will talk themselves into a better temper, and it may be sooner than another could talk them into it.

Eliphaz had laid before Job the miserable condition of a wicked man, that he might frighten him into repentance: Here, on the other hand, he shews him the happiness which those may be sure of that do repent, that he might allure and encourage him to it:

Ministers must try both ways in dealing with people, must speak to them from mount Sinai by the terrors of the law; and from mount Sion by the comforts of the gospel, must set before them both life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Now here observe,

1. The good counsel which Eliphaz gives to Job; and good counsel it is to us all, tho' as to Job it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man, and now a stranger and enemy to God.

1. *Acquaint now thy self with God.* Acquiesce in God; so some. And our great duty it is at all times, especially when we are in affliction, to accommodate our selves to, and quiet our selves in, all the disposals of the divine providence: *Join thy self to him*; so some; fall in with his interests, and act no longer in opposition to him. Ours renders it very well, *Acquaint thy self with him*: Be not such a stranger to him as thou hast made thy self by casting off the fear of him, and restraining prayer before him. It is the duty and interest of every one of us, to acquaint our selves with God. We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on him, join our selves to him in a covenant of friendship, and then set up and keep up a constant correspondence with him, in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour that we are made capable of this acquaintance; our misery that by sin we have lost it; our privilege that thro' Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

2. *Be at peace.* At peace with thy self, not fretful and uneasy, and in confusion; let not thy heart be troubled, but be quiet and calm, and well composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him: Do not carry on this unholy war. Thou complaineest God is thine enemy; be thou friends with him. It is the great concern of every one of us to make our peace with God, and it is necessary, in order to our comfortable acquaintance with him; for *can two walk together except they be agreed?* Amos iii. 3. This we must do quickly; now, before it be too late: Agree with thine adversary while thou art in the way. This we are earnestly urged to do: Some read it, Acquaint thy self, I pray thee, with him, and be at peace. God himself beseeches us; ministers in Christ's stead pray us to be reconciled: Can we gainsay such entreaties?

3. *Receive the law from his mouth*, ver. 22. Having made thy peace with God, submit to his government, and resolve to be ruled by him, that thou mayst keep thy self in his love. We receive our being and maintenance from God: From him we hope to receive our bliss, and from him we must receive law; *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Which way soever we receive the intimations of his will, we must have our eye to him; whether he speaks by scripture, ministers, conscience, or providence, we must take the word as from his mouth, and bow our souls to it. Tho' in Job's time we do not know that there was any written word, yet there was a revelation of God's will to be received. Eliphaz looked upon Job as an ill man; and was pressing him to repent and reform: And herein consists the conversion of a sinner, his receiving the law from God's mouth, and no longer from the world and the flesh. Eliphaz being now in contest with Job, appeals to the word of God for the ending of the controversy; Receive that, and be determined by it. *To the law and to the testimony.*

4. *Lay up his word in thine heart.* It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, *Prov.* iii. 18. We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe: And we must lay it up in our hearts, as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion; and we may neither lose it wholly, nor be at a loss for it in a time of need.

5. *Return to the Almighty*, ver. 23. Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty: Do not only turn towards the Almighty in some good inclinations and good beginnings, but return to him; return home to him, quite to him, so as to reach to the Almighty; so Mr Poole; by an universal reformation, an effectual thorough change of thy heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him.

6. *Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle.* This was the advice Zophar gave him, chap. xi. 14. *Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle.* Put iniquity far off, the further the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. Thou must not only not be wicked thy self, but reprove and restrain sin in those that are under thy charge. Note, Family reformation is needful reformation; we and our house must serve the Lord.

2. The good encouragement which Eliphaz gives Job, that he should be very happy if he would but take this good counsel. In general, *thereby good shall come unto thee*, ver. 21. The good that is now departed from thee; all the good thy heart can desire, temporal, spiritual, eternal, good shall come to thee. God shall come to thee into covenant and communion with thee, and he brings all good with him, all good in him. Thou art now ruined and brought down, but if thou return to God, *thou shalt be built up again*, and thy present ruins shall be repaired. Thy family shall be built up in children, thy estate in wealth, and thy soul in holiness and comfort.

The promises which Eliphaz here encourageth Job with, are reducible to three heads.